

Ola K. Berge

## Look to Norway™

### Current Norwegian foreign cultural policy



HSN

Ola K. Berge

**Look to Norway<sup>TM</sup>**

**Current Norwegian foreign cultural policy**

A PhD dissertation in  
**Culture Studies**

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## Preface

In 2009, being the first assignment as a rookie researcher at Telemark Research institute, I conducted a small project on the international work of the performing arts organization, the Performing Arts Hub Norway (PAHN). The project aimed at finding trends and tendencies concerning what art and artists who travel where and for what reason.<sup>1</sup> This project sparked a research interest that was further strengthened by working with a project commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 2011-2012, in which my colleague Ole Marius Hylland and I evaluated the Norwegian travel support scheme for artists seeking foreign markets and audiences and the music export office, Music Export Norway.<sup>2</sup> Thus, foreign cultural policy has been an important part of my professional work up until this day, culminating with this thesis: *Look to Norway™ Current Norwegian foreign cultural policy*.

The thesis formally concludes a research project started in 2013, with financial support from the Norwegian Research Council, and as part of the SAMKUL project “The relational politics of aesthetics: Negotiating relations between art and society through cultural policy.” By asking: Does art develop society?, this project studies the relations between aesthetics and politics, highlighted through public measures to ensure a social impact on the arts. Here, aesthetics denotes processes of ascribing artistic value and beauty to certain objects, while politics denotes processes of governing or influencing the development of a society. In the project, the relations between these processes are studied by an empirical analysis of attempts to give arts developmental *agency*: through the democratization of culture, through pedagogical work, through a general music policy, and through the use of culture in foreign policy. The latter is investigated in this thesis. The fact that the project was part of an ongoing Norwegian Research Council

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<sup>1</sup> The project report is found here: [www.telemarksforskning.no/publikasjoner/filer/1672.pdf](http://www.telemarksforskning.no/publikasjoner/filer/1672.pdf) (in Norwegian)

<sup>2</sup> The project report is found here: [www.telemarksforskning.no/publikasjoner/filer/2063.pdf](http://www.telemarksforskning.no/publikasjoner/filer/2063.pdf) (in Norwegian)

project also meant that I could conduct the research as part of my regular work at the Telemark Research Institute (for which I am deeply grateful). In addition, the PhD project was part of the PhD program in Cultural Studies at the University College of Southeast Norway, within which I also completed my mandatory PhD courses and training.

Bø, Norway, March 24. 2017

Ola K. Berge

## Acknowledgements

I am alone fully responsible for the thesis, including any flaws or weaknesses. For any achievements, however, they could never have come about without a number of people who have helped and guided me in this comprehensive research process.

First, I would like to thank all the informants who have contributed with empirical data. Without your kind and patient participation, this project could not have been realized. I would also like to thank the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their generous help and support. In particular, I wish to thank the employees of the Foreign Service stations who I visited during the fieldwork.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Geir Vestheim at the University College of South East Norway (HSN) and Halvard Leira at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), for all their help, critical readings, professional advice and general support.

Furthermore, a big thanks goes to *all* of my colleagues at the Telemark Research Institute, for their inspiration, critical readings and cheering. In particular, I would like to thank my fellow researchers at the cultural section, Heidi Stavrum, Per Mangset, Bård Kleppe, Mari Torvik Heian, Åsne Dahl Haugsevje and Nanna Løkka. A very special thanks goes to Ole Marius Hylland, as well as a special thanks to (the patient CEO of the Telemark Research Institute) Karl Gunnar Sanda.

Thanks also to my colleagues in the SAMKUL research team, Jane Woddis (University of Warwick), Egil Bjørnsen (Agder Research), Erling Bjurström (Linköping University), and again, Ole Marius Hylland, Heidi Stavrum and Per Mangset.

Thanks to my fellow PhD students attending the Cultural Studies PhD program at the HSN. A special thanks to discussant at the final assessment seminar, Nils Asle Bergsgard.

Thanks to Frode Nyvold for getting me interested in anthropology. Thanks to Ingmar Meland for getting me interested in philosophy. Thanks to Per Mangset for getting me interested in sociology.

But, most of all, thanks to my family: Unni, Knut, Anders, Hølje, Johannes, Mother and Father.

## Abstract

The thesis *Look to Norway™ Current Norwegian foreign cultural policy* (2017) investigates the field of foreign cultural policy. Culture and the arts have had a continuous prominent position within foreign policy and diplomacy as they have been considered to have central representative functions, both mirroring and constituting national cultural distinctions. At the same time, culture in a broad sense has constituted what has been regarded as important national self-images. To engage successfully in international relations, cultural relations included, is a highly prioritized governmental work task in today's globalized world. How this is best done in a world that is increasingly complex and competitive is a question that presumably ranks high within the same governments.

This PhD thesis attends directly to this question, examining how culture and cultural policy are conceived, legitimated and operationalized within the Norwegian foreign cultural practice. Foreign cultural policy potentially spans over culture in both a broad and narrow sense, from culture in an anthropological meaning of the term to art and artist policy, and – in an interrelated manner – identity policy. In this thesis, the focus is primarily on culture in the narrow sense, and therefore on the MFA's relationship to cultural expressions and artists and cultural workers (and the organizations and institutions and art field). Nonetheless, since general interests are such an inherent part of foreign policy, cultural policy, for example in its identity policy mode, it is impossible not to include to some degree.

Since the main responsibility for Norwegian foreign cultural policy is explicitly placed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), this ministry constitutes the empirical focal point of the study. This focus also includes the field that it is set to cooperate with and serve, i.a. other ministries, councils and the closely related art field (with its institutional and individual agents). Following from these thematic and empirical grounds, the thesis aims to answer the following research questions: *What position does culture have in foreign policy? What explains this position? And, what are the operational consequences*



*of this position?* The empirical data used to answer this was sampled by using a multi-sited ethnographical strategy, and consists of qualitative data from participating observation, qualitative interviews and document studies, covering the MFA's cultural policy operations during the project period (2013-2016). Theoretically, the work places itself within the disciplinary tradition of cultural policy research. More specifically, it takes on a discursive approach, highlighting how authoritative texts, images and narratives underlie and determine how policies, positions and practices are thought and acted on.

The thesis concludes that Norwegian foreign cultural policy has developed towards an increasingly mainstream rational and purposive operationalization of culture and cultural policy. Within this regime, the focus has changed from seeing culture and the arts mainly as a component of a broad international cultural cooperation and national self-presentation, to more specialized approaches to release an expected capacity to compete in a global market of expressions, attitudes and ideas, all serving interests of both a general and specific nature. The policy thus combines instrumental and non-instrumental aims and objectives in such a seamless way that any attempt to separate them seems impossible. This is despite the fact that an instrumental agenda is often posed as problematic within an art and cultural policy context. The thesis further concludes that this situation, although causing ambivalence within the arts, is more problematic from a principal than empirical position, as the current authoritative discourse favors pragmatism and opportunism over idealism.

**Keywords: foreign cultural policy, international cultural relations, cultural diplomacy, creative industries, nation branding**

## Abbreviations

EU:	European Union
GC:	General consulate
MFA:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoMA:	The Museum of Modern Art (New York)
NFI:	Norwegian Film Institute
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
NK:	Norwegian Association for Arts and Crafts
NOK:	Norwegian Kroner (the Norwegian monetary unit)
NORLA:	Norwegian Literature Abroad
NSD:	Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste)
NYABF:	New York Arts Book Fair
OCA:	Office for Contemporary Art Norway
PAHN:	Performing Arts Hub Norway
Prop.:	(Ministry) Budget proposition
SSB:	Statistics Norway (Statistisk sentralbyrå)
UN:	United Nations



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# **1. Introduction: A Field of Tension in a World of Change**

To engage successfully in international relations, cultural relations included, is a highly prioritized governmental work task in today's globalized world. How this is best done in a world that is also increasingly complex and competitive, is a question that presumably ranks high within the same governments.

In this thesis, I examine the field of foreign cultural policy. What exactly that such a field comprises, in terms of institutional and individual agents, ideas and rationalities, phenomena and concepts, is not easy to define, as it is both complex and context-dependent. It is complex, as it could accommodate vastly different concepts or activities such as identity policy and artist promotion, cultural export and international student exchange, or European Capitals of Culture and a bilateral cultural cooperation of the High North. It is situated thusly because the definition of this policy field will vary depending on who or when you ask. Foreign cultural policy may mean something completely different to a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs compared to a jazz musician touring Europe. It is not my intention with this work to try to come up with such an authoritative definition, even though I am aware that a scientific work could be read for that purpose. On the other side, to research a field without in some way demarking the scope of the study is at the least inexpedient. For this reason, a rough, general focus should be designated.

First, this PhD thesis seeks to examine the cultural component of foreign policy and the link between cultural and foreign policy. Hence, the empirical focus of the study is the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which means that my attempt to look at the field of Foreign Cultural policy goes through this ministry and cultural affairs as foreign policy. However, this does not exclude keeping a close eye on the field that the ministry is set to cooperate with and serve, a field that includes other ministries, councils and the closely related art field (with its institutional and individual agents).



Furthermore, foreign cultural policy potentially spans over culture in both a broad and narrow sense, from culture in an anthropological meaning of the term to art and artist policy, and – in an interrelated manner – identity policy. In this thesis, the focus will primarily be on culture in the narrow sense, and therefore on the MFA's relationship to cultural expressions and artists and cultural workers (and the organizations and institutions and art field). Nonetheless, since general interests are such an inherent part of foreign policy, cultural policy, for example in its identity policy mode, is impossible not to include on some level.

Finally, foreign cultural policy can be analyzed in terms of the general and the particular, in this case, the Norwegian. In the following, the focus will mainly be on the particular, as the study is specifically related to Norwegian (and Norwegian departmental) foreign cultural policy. However, because many of the issues relevant within this particular context are also of a global character, a central premise is that the specific holds a capacity to inform the general. Hence, to contribute to general insight is a clear ambition of the project.

Culture enters the foreign policy domain in numerous ways, politically, socially and economically. The arts have had a continual position within foreign policy and diplomacy as they have been considered to have central representational functions, both mirroring and constituting national cultural peculiarities (Ninkovich 1981, Mitchell 1986, Wyszomirski, Burgess et al. 2003, Schneider 2009). "From the reciprocal gifts of ancient rulers to modern-day Expos," Bound, Briggs et al. assert, culture has been seen as "a way for leaders and countries to show who they are, assert their power and build lasting relationships" (2007: 11). Consequently, as Cynthia Schneider asserts, "cultural knowledge and understanding lie at the heart of every foreign policy challenge (and of many economic ones)" (2009: 260). At the same time, given its profoundly international character and ambition, culture and the arts become part of a foreign policy agenda simply as an effect of their (boundless) operations. As a result, since foreign policy authorities hold a principal responsibility for all national interests and agents abroad,

foreign policy also becomes an inseparable part of culture and cultural policies (Nisbett 2012).

Social fields are characterized by a continuous conceptual and physical (re)shaping that closely relates to- and is determined by a number of underlying discourses. A study of a specific social field could therefore productively take the form of a study of such underlying discourses. The field of foreign cultural policy is no exception, and analytically, this study adheres to analyzing the discourse or discourses that underlies and determine foreign cultural policy. A discourse can be seen here as a socially determining system of practices that: a) holds a specific potential of norms, values and beliefs, b) consists of a specific discursive *materiality*, a series of formal and informal, material and immaterial texts and objects, and c) is surrounded by a distinct *discursive field* of shared meaning and materiality (Neumann 2001).

The use of the concept of discourse builds on several sources and theoretical frameworks. Here, it reflects the multi- or inter-disciplinary – to some degree even eclectic – theoretical foundation of cultural studies and cultural policy research (Bennett 2004, Scullion and García 2005) that forms the disciplinary point of departure, both for this thesis and for my research activities in general. It does of course, as with most discourse analyses, make use of Foucault's works and views of discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 2002: 53-54). It is, however *not* a discourse analysis in a strict Foucauldian way. There are two reasons for this. First, since Foucault was occupied with grand historical macro studies of social institutions such as knowledge or moral, and this thesis covers a small, specific governmental institution captured in the present moment, I think a direct adaptation would make little sense. Second, Foucault's focus was on social structures rather than individual agency, a focus that expels important analytical space for what the American International Relations theorist Jennifer Milliken terms play of practice (1999), i.e. agents' potential to be not only determined by structures, but also themselves to impact on the very structures. Here, agency instead directs attention to the way norms and conventions form a potential for acting out different social roles, be it professional roles

like being artists or diplomats, or private, like being solidary or elitist. Consequently, discursively determined practices open for some mindsets while closing for others. For instance, because a discourse like foreign cultural policy consists of values and conventions sampled from a complex discursive field, it opens for a complex play over what values may or may not determine social interaction. Hence, this perspective puts at its center the values that constitute cultural activity, and the interests that hold the power to define the values to dominate the discourse.

In principle, foreign cultural policy could mean almost any international contact or relation. It was thus necessary to narrow down the empirical scope of the work. As mentioned, the empirical focus of the research is the cultural policy of the Norwegian MFA. The data material that constitutes that basis of the analysis therefore consists of qualitative data from participating observation, qualitative interviews and document studies, covering the MFA's cultural policy operations during the project period (2013-2016). The participating observation took place at six cultural events supported by the MFA,<sup>3</sup> and three affiliated Foreign Service missions,<sup>4</sup> during six non-consecutive fieldwork periods throughout 2014. The interview data consists of 24 qualitative, semi structured, in-depth interviews with MFA employees (including both diplomats and other staff), representatives of a range of art institutions (including all the organizations that advise the MFA on art issues). In addition, it consists of close to 110 shorter, less formal and unstructured field interviews, including many artists, cultural workers, creative business representatives, politicians and journalists/media. In addition to field observations and interviews, a complimentary source of data in the project was

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<sup>3</sup> Norwegian Literature Abroad, NORLA's *international translator seminar* at Holmen Fjordhotell in Oslo, the *Venice Biennale* in Italy, the International Delegate Program at the *Øya Festival* in Oslo (*Øya International*), the *New York Art Book Fair*, in USA, the *Ibsen season at the Barbican Center* in London, UK and photographer Øyvind Hjelman's exhibition at *Mois de la Photo* in Paris

<sup>4</sup> New York, London and Paris

different forms of texts, most prominently a body of gray literature (policy documents) and a selection of media texts.

Based on this empirical and analytical point of departure, the study is guided by the three overarching research questions:

**What position does culture have in foreign policy? What explains this position? And, what are the operational consequences of this position?**

The thesis hence attends to how culture and cultural policy is conceived, legitimated and operationalized within Norwegian foreign policy.

However, in general, both the research questions and the research object relate to a complex contextual backdrop. Thus, before further specifying and elaborating on the thesis' main problem, it seems relevant to discuss in some detail what in particular distinguishes this context.

## **1.1 Soft and hard policies**

One of the many intriguing features of the field of foreign cultural affairs is the fact that it makes up the grounds for a meeting of seemingly different and opposing worlds of policy (Ninkovich 1981). This means a subsequent meeting of rationalities, aims, interests, agents and institutions of often quite different character. Foreign cultural policy serves as an exciting case for studies of the intersection between two seemingly heterogeneous, and therefore potentially conflicting, policy domains. Even if culture and cultural policy hold significant potential for both social and economic impact within a foreign policy domain, it is often viewed a rather soft policy element. As held by Bound, Briggs et al. (2007: 11):

... in foreign policy, so often dominated by realpolitik thinking, culture and cultural exchange are often regarded as being desirable, but not essential. A common view is that, while cultural diplomacy can help establish and support working relationships between countries, it is strictly subordinate to the harder stuff of laws and treaties, bilateral negotiations, multilateral structures and military capability.

For this reason, culture and cultural policy inevitably connect to the conceptual framework of *soft – hard*, a binary opposition that, in different shapes, will frequently appear throughout the thesis.

### 1.1.1 A renewed interest in culture

“In a world where global relations are becoming increasingly complex, intercultural understanding has perhaps never been so important”, Nisbett asserts (2016: 1). An interesting aspect of culture and cultural policy’s place within foreign policy is the apparent renewed interest that culture holds in today’s world. Most prominently, this interest relates to two things: An increased focus on culture and cultural expressions as a global commercial power factor, and an increased relevance due to a rediscovered conflict potential. The latter is particularly interesting within this perspective, as culture for long has been seen as relevant in foreign policy for the opposite: its inter-human understanding and reconciliation potential (Lending 2000, Wyszomirski, Burgess et al. 2003).

First, let us look at how culture and art is increasingly seen as a relevant product, capable of producing both economic and symbolic profits. In December 2016, news bulletins reported that the production rights to the Norwegian TV drama *Skam* [Shame],<sup>5</sup> a domestic success targeting a young audience (recommended for 15-year-olds, though also appealing to a much wider target group), had been sold to XIX Entertainment and therefore the US and Canadian market.<sup>6</sup> The sale to XIX Entertainment, which is run by the influential British entertainment entrepreneur Simon Fuller, who concocted *American Idol* (and its British predecessor, *Pop Idol*) and managed the Spice Girls, is just one of many recent examples of a successful Norwegian culture export. This sale,

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<sup>5</sup> *Skam* is a Norwegian young adult TV series about the daily life of teenagers at the Hartvig Nissen School, a fashionable high school at Frogner in Oslo. It is produced by NRK P3, which is part of the NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation).

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/arts/television/will-skam-a-norwegian-hit-translate.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/arts/television/will-skam-a-norwegian-hit-translate.html?_r=0)

illustrative of an offensive and attractive Norwegian culture and art scene, is not unique. Internationally, professional Norwegian art over the past years has experienced a significantly increased position and popularity. Artistic and business goals, that only 10 years ago seemed impossible or unrealistic, today is coming true. The Oslo-based Snøhetta architectural firm is redesigning Times Square in New York City, if they are not overlooking the building of their own new library in Alexandria, Egypt. The Norwegian-, now Los Angeles-based, pop producer duo Stargate celebrates a steady number of Grammy awards and number one hits on the Billboard Hot 100 list, with artists like Beyoncé and Rihanna. Just a year ago, the Norwegian producer Morten Tyldum was nominated for eight Oscar awards, for the film *The Imitation Game*, and received one. Authors such as Jo Nesbø, Per Petterson and Karl Ove Knausgård receive international fame and top best sellers lists with titles like *Cockroaches*, *Out Stealing Horses* or *My Struggle*.

These improved results in foreign arenas have resulted in a substantially increased self-confidence within and among Norwegian artists and cultural workers, a self-confidence that was already on the rise much due to the Stoltenberg II government's Culture Initiative Program,<sup>7</sup> increasing funding for the art field by almost 100% over eight years, from 2005 to 2013 (Henningsen 2015). This has also resulted in a political awakening. From being almost totally dominated by internal aspects, Norwegian cultural policy has become more and more aware of the policy's international potential. Never before has cultural policy rhetoric – also the one expressed by the MFA, which holds a shared responsibility for Norwegian cultural policy – been so engaged in international ambitions, convinced of the multiple profits lying in art export both for artists and the art sector, and for general national interests. Here, the Norwegian case is in good company, as the so-called creative industry over the past few years has been ascribed

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<sup>7</sup> In Norwegian: *Kulturløftet*. In English, the title of this program literally means, "lifting the culture." However, the name more often refers to the two-fold meaning of the word "løftet," which in addition to lifting means a promise.

enormous economic and social potential, capable of not only securing millions of new jobs, but also of modernizing the post-industrial labor market (Hughson and Inglis 2001, Volkerling 2001, Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005). So, it came as no big surprise when the board leader for the new Norwegian National Museum, opening in a brand new six billion Norwegian kroner (NOK)<sup>8</sup> premises in Oslo in 2020, just days after her appointment (by the Ministry of Culture) boldly stated that *art is the new oil*. Despite witty commentators responding that this, e.g. would mean selling 378 of Munch's The Scream painting at the price of 650 million kroner at Sotheby's each year,<sup>9</sup> and that in the "real world" artists are struggling enough as it is to support themselves, much less being able to create revenues the size of the oil industry, so the rhetoric still looms high. Recent cultural policy has been increasingly engaged in what seems to be an international trend, making art and artists less dependent on state subsidies, and hence more market oriented. In such policies, at least in a small art market as the Norwegian, international ambition is not really an option, it is a necessity.

At the same time, over the past years and for several reasons, culture in a broad definition has become an increasingly prominent and pronounced factor of international politics. As Singh asserts: "In our world of pervasive information networks and intensely interactive communication, the flows of cultural representations, centered on created aesthetic expressions, are growing exponentially" (2010: 1). Moreover, according to the European Commission, "[T]he global context is characterized by competing understandings of central values and organizing principles of society, including the meaning and direction of politics, economics, culture and ultimately human life" (2016: 61). One example is culture's role as a way of demarking national identity in times when geographical and territorial borders dissolve in the wake of European integration, increasingly internationalized trade and blitz-fast technological development (Belanger

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<sup>8</sup> Approximately € 670,000,000 or \$710,000,000 (December 2016).

<sup>9</sup> The Scream by Munch was sold at Sotheby's for 650 million kroner in 2012.

1999). However, culture in terms of identity has also shown itself as a source of strife. In the wake of a still ongoing war on terrorism, the old device of a *clash of civilizations*<sup>10</sup> has been rearticulated, i.a. in a response to a profound lack of comprehension of the sudden hatred towards what was assumed to be esteemed Western values that materialized, particularly through the 9/11 attack.

In January 2015, the French caricature magazine Charlie Hebdo, specializing in political and religious satire, was attacked by Muslim fundamentalist terrorists during an editorial meeting, leaving 11 people dead and 11 others injured from machine gun bullets. The reason presumably was the magazine's publications of Mohamed drawings, which were allegedly blasphemous. The event evoked widespread fear and condemnation, including in Norway, where it served as an unpleasant reminder of the Mohamed caricature conflict some 10 years ago, following from a Norwegian editor publishing the Danish artist Kurt Westergård's drawing of the prophet with a suicide bomb in his turban, first published in the Danish newspaper Jyllandsposten. Not least, it reminded of the comprehensive civil uprising in a number of Muslim countries in response, thereby leaving several embassies attacked and burnt. In a globalized world, where cultural signifiers spread literally at the speed of light, values thought of as fundamental to our liberal democracy, and up until now self-evident and important Western cultural and political ideas well-suited for soft power purposes, have now been proven as not only harshly unwelcome in Muslim countries, but indeed deadly dangerous. Again, artistic work – what would appear as relatively innocent drawings – had caused a deadly effect, serving as a prominent proof that culture and cultural policy, perhaps to an unprecedented degree, had entered the global policy stage, particularly that of foreign policy and international relations.

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<sup>10</sup> The phrase refers to a hypothesis that people's cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world. It was proposed by political scientist Samuel P. Huntington in a 1992 lecture at the American Enterprise Institute, which was then developed into a 1993 Foreign Affairs article titled: "The Clash of Civilizations?"



### 1.1.2 Deterritorialization

As culture has become an increasingly important factor within global governance and international foreign policy, the institutional framework that encompasses foreign cultural policy has also been facing considerable challenges, or even a crisis. For example, over the past few decades, the field of foreign policy has been faced with numerous challenges that are increasingly global in nature. These developments are a series of radically important social, economic, technological and geopolitical changes, with many of them being what is commonly referred to as globalization effects. Other examples are increased mobility and migration, and an increasingly liberalized and transnational world trade (the growth of a thriving transnational business climate and multinational corporations, the integration of state economies, etc.). Also, an exact same communication technology was developed (preparing for increased general mobility, increased opportunities for travel and experience and consumer culture) (Appadurai 1990, Featherstone 1991, Giddens 1991, Robertson 1992, Beck, Giddens et al. 1994, Rothkopf 1997, Belanger 1999, Leonard, Stead et al. 2002).

Such developments have caused both fear and joy, on the one hand woes of Westernized standardization, unification and homogenization (Barker 2003), while on the other, an empowerment of (g)local competitive cultural and aesthetic forms and expressions, and consequently the decline of monolithic and hegemonic cultural expressions, institutions and movements (cf. Peterson and Kern 1996). All of this of course relevant to policy on different levels; trade and economy, defense and security, development and cultural issues and policies have become increasingly integrated, as national interests in one area have proved to have consequences on the other. Hence, globalization effects are not a one-way stream of influences, destabilizing traditional culture. Because the term globalization has resulted in the coining of its counterpart *glocalization*, globalization effects have raised counter-effects of protection and resistance. Thus, the recent 40 or so years have been seminal in the explosive development of cultural diversity, cooperation and competition, which has nourished so many transnational and transcultural projects trajectories. In her research of Norwegian

foreign cultural affairs from 2000, Lending observes that the foreign cultural framework conditions during the 1980s and 90s have changed considerably. She particularly emphasizes how the end of the Cold War, European integration, regionalization, globalization and increasingly sophisticated means of communication, in combination with differentiation at all levels of society and the emergence of multi-ethnic cultures, have all contributed to putting international cultural cooperation on the agenda (Lending 2000). To a large degree, this is a development that states and governments have had limited control over. Still, these megatrends have had an immense impact on policy thinking and practice.

Concurrently, the art world has seen similar radical changes, mainly in the form of a restructuring or even the breakdown of aesthetic hierarchies and taxonomies, deinstitutionalization and an altered art production-distribution-consumption-relationship (Beck, Giddens et al. 1994, Peterson and Kern 1996, Azenha 2006, Looseley 2011, Mangset 2012). Art and artists are increasingly taking part in transnational flows, induced by lower travel costs and rapidly growing and professionalized international markets for art and cultural goods. For this reason, internal and external markets and economies are dissolved and rethought in new and innovative ways, both leading to a similar dissolution of traditional art concepts such as home and abroad-markets, peers and audiences. Consequently, one could argue that several of the abovementioned effects have coincided and had a mutually intensifying effect on the foreign and cultural policy field. A term that both quite concretely captures these recent developments (and which also on a more intuitive, philosophical level suggests seeing both culture and nations as constructed “territories” in particular need of conceptual framing, and thus vulnerable to changes to these frames) is *detrterritorialization*. According to Popescu (2010), the concept, originally launched by Deleuze and Guattari (1984):

... spatial manifestations of contemporary changes under way in the relationship between social life and its territorial moorings. ... Deterritorialization has often been associated with globalization. The bonds that tied economics, politics, and culture to fixed spatial configurations such as national territories are loosened under globalization pressures. Globalization flows, suggesting mobility, are perceived as replacing the space of places, suggesting territorial fixity.

In many ways, deterritorialization challenges traditional thinking around nation-states, something that in turn raises important and interesting questions about national foreign policies. Even though recent developments, showing proof of reterritorialization and disintegration rather than the opposite (e.g. signs of growing European nationalism or the UK's or Catalonia's relationships to the EU or Spain) to some degree dismiss a theory of the end of nation-states (cf. Guéhenno 1995), nations are still vulnerable to a dissolution of its symbolic borders (Singh 2010). As foreign policy is supposed to safeguard national interests, how do such policies relate and react to a situation in which the symbolic boundaries for such states are seen as increasingly ambiguous? Moreover, as foreign policy observers have noticed, over the past years there has been a considerable social turn within diplomacy (Hayden 2011). Deterritorialization processes have led to an end to the hegemonic status of state governments in international relations and foreign policy. Since nation-states hold a reduced legitimacy within global politics, non-governmentally induced, micro-oriented (people-to-people) diplomacy has increased. Concurrently, traditional diplomacy has been weakened, insofar as what some of these observers has termed the end of diplomacy's golden era. In 2009, Kjell Dragnes a journalist in the Norwegian paper *Aftenposten* argued that:

Diplomacy's golden era has long since been over. The system with embassies and other foreign missions are thoroughly passé. Although states remain important elements of the international system, their foreign services have not managed to adapt to the new requirements and the new conditions. Ultrafast electronic services can empty or fill up the public treasury in an instant, while non-state actors such as NGOs, terror networks, international and multinational companies and global information providers like the Internet defy traditional foreign services. Subnational actors like ministries or regions [...] operate their own "foreign policies". So do, so to speak, the many Norwegian citizens who reside throughout the world, some in sheer colonies, or the many tourists who fill the planes to and from Norway. (Dragnes 2009)<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 Research gap and research questions

In the first sections of this thesis, the focus has been on culture's position in a foreign policy that faces a series of fundamental changes. The world is in rapid change, as

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<sup>11</sup> Quote translated from Norwegian to English by the author of the thesis; retrieved 07.13.2015.

globalization effects in both the short and long terms dissolve traditional national state structures and confinements, whereas new technology boosts the flow of people and cultural signifiers. It thus makes sense to claim that culture's position is one of renewed interest, perhaps even renewed meaning.

Somewhat surprising, given the role of internationalization within an increasingly globalized world, the nature of- and impacts from such foreign cultural policies is heavily under-researched. For instance, the two most recent comprehensive studies of Norwegian foreign cultural policy and international culture/art exchange were conducted in 1997 (Mangset) and 2000 (Lending). Also in an international cultural policy research context, the same research gap seems evident. Paschalidis (2009) argues, e.g. that there is a domestic bias within cultural policy research, over-focusing on national institutions and principles and strategies that concern the administration and regulation of culture. Minnaert (2012: 2) agrees, holding that since "national cultural policy in most countries [is] much more elaborate than international cultural policy and therefore likely more relevant for research purposes – Paschalidis is definitely right that there is limited research on external policy."

On their side, Ang, Isar et al. argue that the field of cultural diplomacy, despite the fact that it "looms large in present-day cultural policy and discourse," has been "insufficiently analysed by the cultural disciplines" (2015: 1). Rightly, over the past three or four years, a growing number of foreign policy researchers have started to show interest in this research field, a fact that is reflected in conference presentations and in article production. For example, during the past couple of editions of the biannual International Conference for Cultural Policy Research (ICCP), several papers on the subject were presented, something that was previously unheard of, and an interesting observation in itself. The foremost achievement reflecting the strengthened interest, however, is probably the International Journal of Cultural Policy's (IJCP) launch of a special edition, *Cultural diplomacy: Beyond the national interest?* (Ang, Isar et al. 2015) and the initialization of the new journal's *IJCP Virtual Special Issue: Cultural Diplomacy and*

*International Cultural Relations*<sup>12</sup> and *Arts & International Affairs*.<sup>13</sup> Despite this, the renewed role culture and cultural policy play within foreign policy and international relations, and questions that seek to answer how this role is understood and operationalized, seem noticeably absent in the research discourse.

In light of this, new and updated analyses on foreign cultural policy seem highly relevant. This thesis pertains to this need by researching ***how culture and cultural policy is conceived, legitimated and operationalized within foreign policy, more specifically Norwegian foreign policy and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.***

As a result, and in slightly different words, the primary research question of the study can be divided into three parts:

- 1. What position does culture have in foreign policy?***
- 2. What explains this position?***
- 3. What are the operational consequences of this position?***

Moreover, the questions frame three subordinate sections, each of which points to both a number of related, subsequent questions, and to the five analysis chapters. Hence, questions covering how culture is *conceived* within foreign policy and the Norwegian MFA are treated in Chapter 5. Those related to how culture and cultural policy is *legitimated* are placed and discussed in Chapters 6 – 8, while questions related to how culture is *operationalized* are covered in Chapter 9.

### 1.2.1 Foreign policy conceptions of culture

The first of the three research questions directs attention to how cultural affairs and policy is conceived within both a foreign policy and, more specifically, a MFA context.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://explore.tandfonline.com/page/ah/cultural-diplomacy>

<sup>13</sup> <https://theartsjournal.net/>

The analytical approach is to examine the MFA's (cultural) organizational structure and features, including underlying rationalities, aims, strategies and means. In this work, I seek to examine the preconditions for the production and implementation of cultural policy within a mainly foreign policy framework in a small foreign ministry (like the Norwegian). In particular, two conditions underlie this interest. First, and here I fear I repeat myself, culture's position within foreign policy and the MFA represents a meeting of two relatively dissimilar discourses, epitomized through the somewhat stereotypical dichotomy soft – hard (see e.g. Bound, Briggs et al. 2007). Of particular interest here is the fact that the MFA holds an explicit, specific cultural policy responsibility. The interesting question then, given the fundamental instrumental/foreign policy character of the ministry, is *whether it at all is possible to operate such a specific cultural policy mandate*. Closely related is the meeting between an instrumental and a non-instrumental policy rationality, each of which tends to be seen as representations of the soft – hard dichotomy, more than the rationalities that exist omnipresent in policy discourse as such.

Second (however interrelated): the MFA's relation to culture and cultural policy is distinguished by a fairly newly introduced arm's-length distance model of governance (Rimberg 2006). Since 2003, the MFA "lost" or "outsourced" much of its operational power, e.g. selecting artists to receive funding, cultural professionals meeting up with Norwegian peers, etc., due to a decentralization of operational responsibility to seven art organizations. One of the most interesting questions within the field of foreign cultural policy, not least in light of Mangset's field analysis from 1997, is therefore *whether the MFA's work profile represents or relates to the interests of the arts and the art world*.

### 1.2.2 Legitimations of culture (in foreign policy)

The second research question engages in how culture is legitimized within foreign policy and the MFA. Analytically, this chapter relates closely to questions on cultural value that is further discussed in Chapter 2.2. This also builds on a more general theory of how

social meaning and reason, e.g. values and interests, are produced, maintained and (from time to time) altered within the framework of discourse (cf. Milliken 1999, Lähdesmäki 2011), which is discussed in depth in Chapter 3. The point of departure here is how time spent on culture is rationalized within a foreign policy, and in this case the MFA context. Besides, what impact does culture and the arts have – or perhaps more accurately: *What impact is culture and art claimed to have – that justifies its position within foreign policy?* This question further relates to a series of subordinate questions addressed in *three* respective analysis chapters (6, 7 and 8). First, under the heading, Art for art's sake, the question is how culture and art's intrinsic values are seen as being suited to legitimize their position within foreign policy. What are, from different perspectives (artists', cultural workers', institutional organizers', diplomats', etc.), the important reasons for artists to seek international markets, and how are these needs attended to within a foreign policy framework?

Next, the analysis thematically relates to culture's assumed representational potential. Because a central area of foreign cultural affairs is thought to be its representational role, highlighting favorable features of the nation-state of which it represents, a central focus of the chapter is summarized in the question: *What representational role do art and culture have in the continuous production of Norwegianness, both at home and internationally?* Since the thesis' discursive approach presupposes that cultural identity is produced (constructed), i.a., by the use of narration and imagery (Bhabha 1990, Löfgren 1991), a relevant question: What characterizes this production?

However, culture and arts' representative functions and potential also imply a series of problems. In line with Hall's assertions on identity, warning against narrow-minded essentialist readings of cultural values (1996), an important question is to what extent is it at all possible to speak about Norwegianness as a value. While the hegemonic view today seems to be that essential national value does not exist, such value is still operationalized. It is not difficult to find striking examples on policy agency based on playing with more or less subtle allusions about an additional value coming from

nationality. Based on this, in what ways – if at all – are these issues problematic, and how are they negotiated within foreign cultural policy?

Furthermore, to the arts, national origin can be seen as a delimiting label, potentially threatening their claim for autonomy (Bell-Villada 1996). Consequently, many artists reject or downplay such origin in their work. This of course represents a principal problem for the MFA, being dependent on some sort of link to the art or artist's national origin, in order to secure national interests in both a narrow and a wide sense (which is principally the MFA's job). How can the MFA legitimate working with culture (foreign cultural policy) if it does not give a foreign policy output?

Third and finally, a focus is directed towards culture's commercial potential. Over the past few decades, creative industries have emerged within cultural policy as not only a rhetorical buzzword denoting the sector's potential of being economically more self-supplied, but also a term taken into use by artists and cultural workers themselves (Hartley 2005). As foreign policy is fundamentally about taking care of vital national interests, obviously also trade policy interests, culture as business has concurrently developed into an important point on the MFA's agenda. At the same time, commercial interests within the arts are often seen as profoundly interconnected with instrumentalism, ultimately representing a threat to art's autonomous position in society (Røyseng 2008, Blomgren 2012, Mangset, Kleppe et al. 2012). This, I claim, often causes ambivalence towards commercial rationales among artists and art field representatives, something that is reflected in the way(s) commercial values are articulated and negotiated within the discourse. Important questions on this note therefore include: *What position do commercial motifs have within the art world?, and: How are such motifs articulated and negotiated within an international context?*

### 1.2.3 Operationalizations of culture (in foreign policy)

The final of the three research questions regards how the MFA's understanding of culture is played out in *practice*. It hence attends to how cultural affairs are operationalized within the frameworks of foreign policy, the MFA and the Foreign



Service. Many of the most interesting questions regarding the Foreign Services and cultural policy relate closely to the changes and developments described in the introductory sections (Dragnes 2009, Hayden 2011). Given these rapid changed conditions that current foreign policy faces *How do these institutional agents operate to release the potential that is assumed to reside in culture and cultural representations, and what characterizes this operational mode?* Additionally, because foreign policy is thought to focus primarily on *realpolitik*: What status do cultural affairs hold within the foreign policy discourse? These questions of course touch on the potential tension between the specific aims that intend to secure art and artists' interests, and the aims that seek to secure general national interests.

An interesting feature within the diplomacy is the distance between the operational level and its home moorings. What does this distance have to say? Does, for example, the Service's proximity to the operational level reduce the arm's length that is supposed to stay between state officials and the field they are set to serve? Or, is it rather so that this opens for agents closer to the art world (e.g. locally employed mission staff) to run more independent operations detached from general, overarching aims and strategies decided at home but implemented abroad?

### **1.3 Thesis structure**

Altogether, the thesis consists of 10 chapters. The next, Chapter 2, gives a review of how the most central problems and concepts of the study have been framed and discussed within the field of cultural policy research, the academic position that could be claimed to be the one closest to my academic mother tongue. In particular, the chapter covers issues such as what value culture is seen to hold, how different value relates closely to the concept of instrumentalism, and how this again forms the basis for some of the most ardent tensions of the entire field of cultural policy. Hereafter, there also comes a brief review of some of the previous findings in terms of the interests and power structures that mark the discourse of foreign cultural policy and international cultural relations.

Chapter 3 is the thesis' main theory chapter. It elaborates on the analytical choice of seeing foreign cultural policy as discourse, specifically focusing on reality and meaning as social constructions. On these grounds, discourse is discussed as both productive and produced, as the argument revolves around how discourse on the one hand makes both rationality (reason), subjects (positions) and things (objects and sites) come alive, and on the other is produced through temporary fixations of power and values.

Chapter 4 provides an outline of how the ethnography that sustains the empirical analyses was sampled, and what scientific value it holds. Building on the concept of multi-sited ethnography, the object is to bridge the potential gap between the theoretical and methodological perspectives of the study, taking in the principles of the discursive approach as a central part of both making methodical choices and in producing the final data sample. A central aspect here is scientific self-reflexivity. As a main epistemological premise is that social reality is constructed, scientific work, as all other interpretations and independently of aiming to give thick and true descriptions of that reality, in addition to interpreting, is also create it. That said, the constructivist position does *not* devaluate scientific work. Instead, it casts light over the importance of being aware of the footprint that the researcher him- or herself leaves in the research, being of an ideological, political or other character.

In the first of five analysis chapters, Chapter 5, the focus is on how culture and cultural policy is interpreted within contemporary Norwegian foreign policy, and how this is reflected in the working mandate and organizational structure of the MFA. In other words, the thematic focal point is the MFA as an organization, the policy documents it bases its work on, the instruments it uses in order to operate and, finally, the partners it cooperates with in the art field. It should be stated that the chapter is *not* an organizational analysis, analyzing whether or not the MFA is satisfactorily performing its duties or viewed legitimate by its surroundings, e.g. in terms of the works of DiMaggio and Powell (1991). Rather, the organization is seen as a framework within which the ministry's conception of culture and cultural policy materializes and becomes visible for examination. In terms of the thesis' theoretical framework, this chapter looks at the

discourse per se, asking: What are the prominent/authoritative conceptions of culture in foreign policy and the MFA? In addition, how do these conceptions come to show in the actual organization of the field and the content of its mandate? The chapter therefore starts with an outline of how the MFA is organized both at home and abroad, before it turns to analyzing the main policy rationalities and the most important aims and strategies that underlie the ministry's work. Most prominently, the chapter claims that this work is based on a mix of cultural, foreign and business (trade) policy rationalities, in which foreign, and to some extent cultural policy aims, are today supplemented (and even replaced) with business policy objectives.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 expand the scope from Chapter 5, examining how culture and cultural policy is legitimated within the MFA's activities, predominately relating to- and dealing with culture and art's intrinsic and instrumental values and the tensions that exists between the two. The thematic structure relates to foreign policy's continuous balancing of instrumental and non-instrumental aims and rationalities. Theoretically, i.e. in terms of the discursive approach that analytically frames this study, these three chapters and the questions posed here, hence strongly relate to questions on how discourse is produced. This is, in other words, an attempt to describe and analyze the process that Milliken refers to as a *play of practice* (cf. Chapter 3.3).

In the first of the three, Chapter 6, I direct attention to how the arts in a fundamental way, also within the MFA, is held to have an intrinsic value strong enough to defend that the work with art is an aim of itself. In this chapter, the device *art for art's sake* is examined in terms of a foreign policy framework, showing that this slogan-like phrase, indicating a recognition of the autonomous position of the arts within policy, reaches deeper into foreign policy soil than the Norwegian MFA's mere (however explicit) cultural policy mandate. Chapter 7, by contrast, analyzes how culture is legitimated within foreign policy and the MFA as an effective instrument to attain a number of desirable foreign policy effects. Most prominently, this refers to effects that secure national interests, in both broad (e.g. Norwegian export in general, tourism, other social and political general effects) and narrow (e.g. culture export, senses). Chapter 8 deals

with the commercial potential seen in culture. The analysis here particularly aims at examining how trade policy and commercial rationalities are negotiated within the MFA, thereby balancing the needs and desires of both the art world and more general Norwegian (and foreign) interests.

The thesis' final analysis chapter, Chapter 9, sets the focus on how culture and cultural policy is operationalized within a foreign policy context. The thematic frame within which the analyses take place is the Foreign Service and its extensive network of Foreign Service missions. It is, thus, a study of diplomats and diplomacy. It is also an attempt to link discourse and discursive practice together in one conceptualization, something that is a central idea within the discursive approach that guides the analytical part of this project. In this chapter, I show how diplomacy's peculiar work-form in many ways is particularly suitable in helping to operate foreign policy's cultural agenda. The analysis is especially engaged in examining how different networks, some new and remarkably efficient, are thriving off a renewed foreign policy reality where diplomacy is more important than ever, though the Foreign Service as an institution is about to expire.

Taken together, the five chapters aim to provide a comprehensive insight into the foreign cultural policy of a medium-sized Western liberal democracy in a way that also represents relevance to others that hold an interest in this field of research or this field of policy. This ambition fully materializes itself in the final chapter of the thesis, Chapter 10, holding the main conclusions, and thus the results of the study. Here, there has also been found a place for a final discussion of the value of these findings, and, equally importantly, what further research is needed to strengthen and ultimately further elaborate them. This includes a critical approach to the analytical and methodical choices underlying the results. The chapter also includes a final section pointing to a number of implications following from these results, and subsequently a number of measures that could, or perhaps should, be taken based on the results, including within foreign policy in general, Norwegian foreign policy, the MFA, the Norwegian government and last but not least, the art world.

## 2. External vs. internal cultural policy

As just indicated in the thesis structure section, the aim of this chapter is to get a better grip of the research object by looking at how existing research literature deals with central problems of foreign cultural policy. As in most studies of policy, problems are not hard to find. On the contrary, foreign cultural policy is often depicted as a field of tension, most prominently because it is a field where the seemingly opposing worlds of foreign and cultural policies collide (Singh 2010, Nisbett 2012, Ang, Isar et al. 2015). Departing from Dutch international cultural policy (ICP), the Dutch cultural policy researcher Toine Minnaert (2012: 12) writes:

The discourse of Dutch ICP is clearly a discourse of conflicts. There is a continuous tension between the goals of foreign policy and cultural policy, which over time has led to changing objectives in ICP. Also, tension occurs between the institutions involved in the implementation of policy and the departments responsible for the formulation of policy.

The Norwegian field of foreign cultural policy is no exception. In his comprehensive review of Norwegian international cultural cooperation from 1997, sociologist and cultural policy researcher Per Mangset concludes that this field “is a real ‘battlefield’ of (both manifest and latent) conflicting values, ideologies and interests” (1997:86). The chapter’s ambition of yielding insight into existing relevant research from the field of cultural policy research, that at the same time contributes directly to informing later analyses, is followed by visiting three such problems or areas of tension.

It starts out with addressing the main concepts of foreign cultural policy, namely culture and policy. What do cultural policy researchers mean when they talk about the two, and what are the implications to this study? Furthermore, in light of existing research literature, I develop the idea that foreign cultural policy is a field where two different policy domains meet, and where the potential for tensions and conflict is imminent, due to the two’s opposing character, depicted through the dichotomy of soft – hard. In particular, this conflict potential is discerned through the examination of the notion of value, and the related dichotomy of instrumental – intrinsic value within culture and art. Central to this argument is of course the precondition that while the intrinsic value of culture and art stays central to cultural policy rationality, foreign policy adheres to

instrumental uses (Carter 2015). Moreover, the problem of instrumentalism closely relates to the issue of how culture is legitimated within foreign policy discourse. A discussion of this is hence meant as a fundament for the analyses conducted in Chapters 6-8. Lastly, questions on power and competence are discussed, taking as its starting point that competence is a rephrasing of specialist knowledge, thereby reflecting the systems that ascribe such a specialist status (Foucault 2002). The idea is that such a review will inform later analyses, particularly those presented in Chapter 9, dealing with how culture and cultural policy is operationalized by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Foreign Service.

## 2.1 Culture, policy and cultural policy

In the introduction, I refer to the MFA's cultural policy. A central question when working with cultural policy, both in internal and external/international contexts and senses, is how to understand and delimit this policy field as a concept. As many have asserted before, cultural policy is an amalgam of two individual elements or notions – culture *and* policy – both of them complex and diverse in their own senses. The Norwegian Cultural Policy researcher Sigrid Røyseng (2014: 5) has presented a model that takes into account four different aspects or comprehensions of cultural policy, illustrated in Table 1:

	<b>Narrow policy concept</b>	<b>Broad policy concept</b>
<b>Narrow culture concept</b>	(1) Policy making and implementation concerning the cultural field on formal public arenas	(2) All exercise of power and authority concerning the cultural field
<b>Broad culture concept</b>	(3) Policy making and implementation concerning culture in general in formal public arenas	(4) All exercise of power and authority that decides how culture in general is defined

Table 1: Røyseng's model of cultural policy concept

According to Røyseng, cultural policy can principally be divided into a narrow and a broad culture concept, and a narrow and a broad policy concept. As Sing asserts, in terms of culture there are two concepts of culture at play: “Culture as everyday group life is an anthropological concept. Nevertheless, it is reflected in the creative and aesthetic expressions regulating, sustaining, or at times, contesting the shared understandings of the meanings of cultures” (2010: 1). Singh’s argument rests on a simple but relatively widespread model distinguishing between a narrow-, an extended- and a wide definition of culture, in which art is included in the narrow concept of culture (Larsen 2012 ). The same model applies to the field of foreign cultural policy and culture in an international context (cf. Mangset 1997, Lending 2000). The most recent governmental white paper report on this issue, White paper report no. 19 from 2013, discusses this as follows:

The concept of culture is used in various ways. This report does not take a socio-cultural definition as its starting point, but is based on the definition stated in the Act of June 29., 2007, no. 89 on public authorities’ responsibility for cultural activity (the Culture Act).<sup>14</sup> According to the Culture Act, cultural activities include the following: a) to create, produce, perform, communicate and distribute art and other cultural expressions, b) protect, promote understanding of, and pass on cultural heritage, c) participate in cultural activities, and d) develop cultural knowledge and expertise. The professional culture life can be limited as a sector of society that includes individuals, companies and institutions that have cultural activities as their purpose and source of income. Norwegian culture life means all cultural activities that show tradition, innovation and cultural diversity in Norway today. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013: 6)<sup>15</sup>

In its narrow sense, culture is therefore seen as a diverse range of cultural expressions playing out on one of several social sectors. On the other hand, in its broad sense, in what some refer to as an anthropological sense, culture is more a diffuse conception of *everyday-life* content. As Sing points out, the two conceptions are highly interrelated.

On the opposite side, in its narrow sense decisions and implementation, policy takes place in formal and public arenas. In a broader sense, however, it can be seen as all

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<sup>14</sup> In Norwegian: *Lov av 29. juni 2007 nr. 89 om offentlege styresmakters ansvar for kulturverksemd (kulturlova)*.

<sup>15</sup> All quotes from White paper no. 19, 2013, are translated in this thesis from Norwegian to English by its author.

conditions that hold room for the exercise of power and authoritative actions. Following from this model, cultural policy – and indeed foreign cultural policy – can therefore be seen to have four different modalities.

Firstly, with narrow policy and culture concepts, cultural policy making and implementation will include that which relates to the cultural field (or sector) and which take place in formal and public arenas. To some degree, this is what could be described as traditional cultural policy, what intuitively leaps to most people's minds when they hear and think of the notion of cultural policy. Within the frame of foreign cultural policy in the Norwegian case, this concept relates to the explicit cultural policy conducted by the MFA as part of their specific (and explicit) cultural policy mandate. With a narrow culture, but with a broad policy concept, cultural policy secondly covers all actions taken that influence the cultural sector, including the ones that in some way enter various foreign, external contexts. These two policy conceptions relate closely to what the British cultural policy researcher Jeremy Ahearne (2009) has termed *explicit* and *implicit* cultural policy. According to Ahearne, explicit cultural policy is "... any cultural policy that a government labels as such" (2009: 143). Furthermore, it is also supplemented with an implicit or effective cultural policy, which is "any political strategy that looks to work on the culture of the territory over which it presides (or on that of its adversary)" (ibid.). He further writes that:

Within the domain of "implicit" cultural policies, one might distinguish also between the unintended cultural side-effects of various kinds of policy and those deliberate courses of action intended to shape cultures but which are not expressly thematised as such. It is true that policies are usually conceived as deliberate strategic courses of action, but these can usefully be analysed in terms of the patterns of neglect or inattention they imply. (ibid.: 144)

Consequently, as also asserted by Røyseng (2014), Ahearne's point is that not alone does the policy explicitly pass itself off as cultural policy being cultural policy in practice. Policies that are not termed as such could very well be its result. One example of such an implicit cultural policy is, according to Ahearne, foreign policy.

Thirdly, with a broad policy and a narrow culture concept, cultural policy could be seen as the decisions that regard culture in general made and implemented in formal public



arenas. Within this notion come all formal policies that deal with culture in a broad, anthropological sense. The most interesting and relevant example that relates to foreign cultural policy in this aspect is perhaps national identity policies.

Also of interest is how the concept of culture in both broad and narrow forms is interrelated, and how this acts out within different policy contexts. As Singh claims, “[r]epresentations shape and change identity.” For this reason, it could be claimed that there is a relation between cultural policy modalities 1 and 3, something that collapses the symbolic boundary often placed in-between, e.g. the foreign ministry’s work with art and their work with identity.

Finally, Røyseng’s model encompasses cultural policy in the meaning culture in a broad sense as a function of all forms of exercise of power and authority. This includes uses of power in other than formal arenas, by other than formal agents, which opens for an analytic framework that is more sensitive to top-down systems other than those of meaning making and policy implementation (Foucault 1983, Nisbett 2012). Since this holds analytical as well as empirical implications, the relationship between power and policy is elaborated more in detail in Chapter 3.3, dealing with different forms of both formal and structural power in policymaking and implementation.

### 2.1.1 Foreign cultural policy, external cultural policy, cultural diplomacy

Another related aspect of deconstructing the cultural policy concept is to further examine the meaning of *foreign* cultural policy. As previously stated, one way to see this latter term is as an extension of (internal or domestic) cultural policy, holding the same features, but relating to a wider foreign, external or international context. A somewhat different approach goes through focusing on ideological structures found in the concept, for example in relation to the different terms that reside in the foreign cultural policy discourse. It is said that we have many names for the things we love, as is also the case here: *external cultural policy*, *international cultural policy*, *international cultural relations*, *cultural diplomacy* and perhaps even more. All of the above terms are used concurrently, and have important overlapping and synonymous features. However, such

use seems to neglect that there are distinctions between them other than strictly semantics, most prominently that of a disciplinary and political provenance. Here, external cultural policy, and international cultural relations in particular, indicate policies close to the art sector, especially cultural diplomacy, which draw attention to culture's place within national foreign policies. In Norway, this uncertainty about where to allocate external cultural policy, in terms of governmental responsibility, is reflected in the fact that it is divided between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture.

The persistent use of *foreign cultural* policy throughout this thesis signals an analytical point; as culture becomes a part of a foreign policy, it is neither cultural nor foreign policy per se. Instead, it is an amalgam of discursive elements and practices, sometimes conflicting and at other times resonating. Thus, it also reflects a disciplinary positioning; the study of foreign cultural policy has to involve perspectives from both foreign and cultural policy studies. Rather, the important question is the degree and shape of integration. It also has to maintain a critical distance to normative agencies potentially growing out of any of the various approaches.

Within the international cultural policy discourse, Nisbett claims, there has been some disagreement "as to where cultural diplomacy is located within the political portfolio. Whilst Mulcahy (1999) describes it as an element of foreign policy, Singh (2010: 12) views it as 'an explicit cultural-policy instrument'" (2012: 558). In fact, they denote distinctions related to different values and power structures, most prominently those that belong to a foreign and a cultural policy discourse, in addition to a policy and third-sector discourse.

Roughly speaking, external cultural policy (which of course distinguishes itself from internal, in the meaning of domestic, cultural policy) and international cultural policy (and its domestic counterpart, national cultural policy) signal a belonging to the cultural policy domain (Paschalidis 2009, Minnaert 2012). Still, they also encompass a definite foreign policy component, as they also take on the above-discussed link between culture in both broad and narrow meanings. For example, the Dutch cultural policy researcher

Minnaert holds that “[p]olicy aimed at the role of culture in foreign relations and the presentation of the nation abroad is referred to as international cultural policy (ICP)” (2012: 2). The one concept that arguably distances itself the most from a diplomacy/foreign policy domain is international cultural relations. According to, e.g. Arndt (2005), this term holds connotations to a freer regime of international cooperation and exchange of the third (public) sector, rather than policy agendas and activities, than what state-induced policy strategies do. However, as Wyszomirski, Burgess et al. (2003) show, despite the places where international cultural relations are used as the main term for the national approach, this still takes place within the institutional framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (e.g. Australia, Canada and Singapore).

Since cultural policy is included in a predominantly foreign policy setting, it is commonly referred to as cultural diplomacy (Schneider 2009, Ang, Isar et al. 2015). The American political scientist Milton C. Cummings defines cultural diplomacy as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding” (2003: 1). Nonetheless, as Nisbett (2016) points out, this definition does not explicitly include either State responsibility or political purpose. In that sense, Cummings’ definition is operating detached from the diplomacy (and consequently, in the Norwegian case, the MFA) that he himself indicates as the activity’s fulcrum. Wyszomirski, Burgess et al. (2003: 1) add to Cummings’ definition, writing:

Generally speaking, the two major components of public diplomacy are: information policy and cultural/educational programs. Cultural and educational diplomacy emphasize exchanges of persons and ideas that directly involve a relatively small number of people and are concerned with promoting long-term mutual understanding between peoples.

However, this is done without really becoming more specific. It could therefore be argued that this term has little analytical precision, instead serving as a vague reference to an activity, or a range of activities, that may or may not involve state engagement, and which may or may not involve national intentions. Yet, if it is a diplomatic activity with no state involvement, who are the diplomats? This problem, and a possible

solution, is further discussed in the final analysis chapter, which deals with the operational cultural policy agency of the diplomacy (see Chapter 9).

Also problematic, according to researchers like Reeves (2004) or Nisbett (2016), is how cultural diplomacy within some research is ascribed a normative agency. Such normativity comes to show, e.g. in the British think tank Demos' report titled: *Cultural diplomacy – culture is a central component of international relations. It's time to unlock its full potential* (Bound, Briggs et al. 2007), in Joseph Nye's *Soft Power: The means to succeed in world politics* (2004), or in two of the American researcher Cynthia P. Schneider's articles, *The Unrealized Potential of Cultural Diplomacy: "Best Practices" and What Could Be, If Only...* and *Culture Communicates: US Diplomacy that Works* (Schneider 2004, 2009). Here, cultural diplomacy is suggested as the answer to most geopolitical problems and challenges, emphasizing culture's alleged ability to promote improved communication and reconciliation far more than its problem-causing capacities (cf. the introductory sections on, e.g. the Mohamed cartoon conflict).

One of the concepts of cultural diplomacy that often involves this grandiloquent rhetoric is *soft power*. The concept is unquestionably linked to the American political scientist Joseph Nye, who defines it as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment" as a result of "the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideas, and policies" (Nye 2004: Introduction X). The power in question is not necessarily one of an intentional use of force, with obvious causal or relational correlations. Rather, it refers to situations where other states (their leaders and/or their populations) act in line with what one specific state<sup>16</sup> wants, without explicitly thinking of this as something they did not choose themselves. In other words, they take their choices of action for granted. As Nye comprehensively describes, this may include ensuring a continued US reputation as a country where dreams come true, in line with

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<sup>16</sup> Additionally, Nye points out that organizations, NGOs and businesses may hold corresponding soft power.

the American dream. Nye points to the potential of soft power, as states through which clever strategies can achieve foreign policy goals that go beyond their relative powers, whether economically or militarily. For instance, Nye refers to Norway when he writes:

Sometimes countries enjoy political clout that is greater than their military and economic weight would suggest because they define their national interest to include attractive causes such as economic aid or peacemaking. ... [T]he posture of peacemaker identifies Norway with values shared by other nations that enhance Norway's soft power. Foreign Minister Jan Peterson [Sic.] argued that "We gain some access," explaining that Norway's place at so many negotiating tables elevates its usefulness and value to larger countries. (Nye 2004: 9-10)

Some of the same objections that were made over in terms of cultural diplomacy may also be raised in the case of soft power. Nye's theory, although highly influential and broadly applied, has still met critique for being unclear, uncritical and normative (Parmar and Cox 2010). In the article, *Who Holds the Power in Soft Power?*, Melissa Nisbett (2016: 4) argues that Nye's concept, "lacks a coherent theoretical framework overall and is seemingly divorced from social and political theory." Consequently, it "fails to offer any serious scholarly rigour or analytic depth" (ibid.). One of Nisbett's most striking arguments relates to Nye's steady belief in the impacts from soft power. With reference to cultural diplomacy in general, and soft power in particular, she writes:

The boldest of claims are made, such as reducing the risk of terrorism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014), enhancing national security (CACI 2009), peace and reconciliation (DCMS 2006), and reversing the erosion of trust (US Department of State 2005). Yet there is absolutely no evidence base to substantiate such claims or back up these assertions. (2016: 10)

Nisbett thus emphasizes the noticeable lack of empirical evidence that it works, in particular addressing the problem of causality. She asks to whom soft power strategies are aimed, and critically argues that since nations do not have collective memories, what the causal relationship between soft power, audiences and effects is (ibid.). The call for an increased reflexivity is appropriate. Over the past years, cultural diplomacy and soft

power have migrated from academic analytical frameworks to increasingly becoming part of (foreign) policy discourse and mainstream rhetoric.<sup>17</sup>

The study of foreign cultural policy richly offers the opportunity to observe a number of classical cultural policy dichotomies played out. In the next chapter sections, two of the most relevant and interesting of these are developed within. First, the focus is on the different values that culture and art are thought to hold, more specifically in terms of art as a means versus as an end.

## **2.2 Intrinsic and instrumental values from culture and art**

Just as cultural policy is an amalgam of the two elements of culture *and* policy, foreign cultural policy, as claimed in the introduction, is an amalgam of two policy domains, namely foreign policy and cultural policy. A central claim of this thesis is that the two come with different perspectives on how culture is valuable, both rhetorically and in practice. This aspect also relates to what I described in the introduction in terms of a soft – hard dichotomy residing in foreign cultural policy, in which the hard metaphor not only implies the use of hard power like (military or economic) coercion, but all forms of instrumentalism, also that including culture and art. For the record, instrumentalism (in the case of culture and art) is defined as the act of using “cultural ventures and investments as a means or instrument to attain goals in other areas” (Vestheim 1994: 65). Such uses are an absolute key component in the field of cultural policy. At the same time, they are the source of a persistent tension, as instrumental uses of the arts are accused of both having a potentially damaging effect that threatens the arts’ autonomous position in society, and being on the rise within society in general and policies in particular (Vestheim 1994, 2008, Mangset 1997, Holden 2005, Belfiore 2006).

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<sup>17</sup> That being said, none of them are explicitly found in Norwegian policy papers, something that perhaps indicates that such use is a primarily Anglo-American phenomenon.

Different uses of the arts inevitably relate to the different value that art is seen to hold, a relationship that is frequently discussed within the cultural policy research literature. Historically, the concept of (cultural) value, and hence valuation, has gone from essentialist beliefs that some expressions of culture were clearly and self-evidently superior to others (Arnold [1869] 1993), to beliefs that cultural values are the result of social processes, and therefore of a relative character (Becker 1984, Bourdieu 1984). Central to this thesis is the analytical stance that discourse produces value through a continuous negotiation of legitimate understandings of what the value consists of.

This view, emerging from social constructivist epistemology, emphasizes reality as constructions produced in language, interaction and social practices (Lähdesmäki 2011). Within this approach, language takes an especially important position, as it is seen as being capable of “producing, justifying and changing actual practices” (ibid.: 60). Even though attention is paid to (discursive) practices, what is articulated and how it is articulated, and by whom, are seen as important access points to analyses of discourse. As Lähdesmäki maintains, referring to Foucault 1972 and Fairclough 1992, a “[c]ritical emphasis in discourse analysis stresses linguistic choices as a use of power” (ibid.: 60), which in turn produce specific ways of representing reality. Hence, Lähdesmäki defines discourse as a particular way of representing reality. In this case, such representations construct the values that are seen as appropriate in order to come forward as being relevant art to an international audience or market. They construct Norwegian international art, external cultural policies, strategies, etc., and, as Lähdesmäki puts it, “the ideas, mental images, notions and expectations related to them in a complex way” (ibid.).

Within the cultural policy research discourse, several contributions on value are interesting. According to Holden (2005), cultural value can be understood as instrumental value, institutional value and intrinsic value. In particular, Holden’s input on instrumental and intrinsic value is relevant here. O'Brien (2010: 15) writes:

Instrumental value is generated by the social and economic policy uses of culture, for example to raise exam results or tackle social exclusion. [...] Intrinsic value is that form of value that is unique to

the cultural sector and isn't found anywhere else. This type of value is very hard to define, but for Holden is associated with ideas of aesthetic excellence and individual enjoyment. Intrinsic value is therefore highly subjective and is hard to fit into the language of outputs and outcomes associated with Holden's other two types of value.

Possibly "very hard to define," the consensus within cultural policy research seems to be that the intrinsic value of the arts closely relates to the notion of freedom or autonomy of the arts. According to the Norwegian art sociologist and cultural policy researcher Sigrid Røyseng, a cornerstone within the art field, and consequently a dominant narrative of various art discourses, is the conception of an autonomy of the arts (2007). Central to this is the idea that the art has to be free (Kant 1995 [1790]). What it is it has to be free from is not always crystal clear, although one of the things often mentioned is just instrumentalism and the thought that art should be used and valued for something outside of itself. Thus, the slogan has become art for art's own sake. Intrinsic value in this sense has consequently been sought to be captured within religious or magic terms (Becker 1984, Abbing 2002, Mangset 2004, Røyseng 2007).

The anxieties over instrumentalism in terms of a reduced autonomy for the art field is one that is often reported, and to some extent confirmed, within academic work on both culture and art. For example, the British cultural policy researchers Stevenson, Rowe et al. (2010: 249) argue that:

Cultural policy is increasingly conceived as capable of achieving a range of social and economic outcomes, including nurturing identity and difference, fostering social inclusion, and developing the creative and economic infrastructure of towns, cities, and nations.

Hence, a "Cultural policy at all levels of governance" they argue, "is expected to address a suite of concerns much broader than those traditionally associated with the arts and creative practice" (ibid.: 248). Their argument therefore leaves no doubt that this development, at least from their point of view, is problematic. Some of the same concerns are also found within foreign cultural policy. For example, Kizlari (2016) claims, as have authors like Arndt (2005) and Pamment (2012), to have made "concerted efforts to set a distinction between cultural diplomacy and cultural relations". Thus, Kizlari continues, the term cultural diplomacy exclusively describes governmental activities, whereas cultural relations relate to third-sector agendas; agendas that, according to



Arendt “grow naturally and organically, without government intervention” (2005: Introduction xviii). As discussed in the previous chapter (see Chapter 2.1.1), research here is in danger of becoming problematically normative, depicting third-sector initiatives as natural and organic, while governmental agendas consequently appear as enforced or authoritarian (Carter 2015). This dichotomous assertion, in many ways resembling a Habermasian distinction between system and lifeworld (1984), therefore assumes that a state engagement by nature means unfavorable interventions of the arts and artists lifeworld. It hence resembles a returning problem, namely the normative stance such claims take against instrumental uses of the arts. Such a stance builds on the idea that the arts one-sidedly lose on such use, a claim that often seems more based on ideological than empirical grounds. It also leaves the art field with less strategic capacity than what is often seen in empirical life.

However, this clear-cut distinction between intrinsic and instrumental values has evoked debate, especially since it has tended to be politicized:

... [s]implifying instrumentalism as inherently “good” or “bad,” and largely focusing on the harmful impact of instrumental policies, with accusations of rigid prescription, loss of artistic quality and integrity, increased bureaucracy and an abdication of responsibility by the state. (Nisbett 2012: 2-3)

Some have argued that while this distinction may work fine as a theoretical concept, empirically they constitute an overly principal framework, losing sight of their increasingly complex practices, in which culture and art hold intrinsic and instrumental values in a mix. Economist David Throsby, for example, points out a much closer link between the intrinsic and economic values of culture (2001). Cultural policy researcher Geir (Vestheim 1994) argues that much of the symbolic value that is imprinted in the intrinsic values of the arts is principally instrumental. He further points out that arts’ educational or civilizing capacities, which are such symbolic values, should be understood as instrumental values, simply because they are desirable effects that politicians seek in funding the arts. In fact, Vestheim claims, it is hard to think of any object entering a policy as explicitly non-instrumental, as policies by virtue are instrumental in terms of their outcome being causally related to their intentions.

Nevertheless, an even stronger critique of the instrumental – non-instrumental dichotomy is asserted by Melissa Nisbett (2012). The critique rests on her empirical analyses, in which she claims to find a significant:

... gap between the academic conceptualisation of instrumental policies in principle and their operation in practice. This strongly demonstrates the need to revise the current understanding of instrumental policies. These policies have traditionally been perceived to be negative, rigid, top-down and frequently imposed by the Government. (ibid.: 12-13)

In contrast, she argues that her data:

... shows the opposite, that an instrumental policy was initiated, formulated and implemented by the cultural sector itself; that it was beneficial for the cultural organisations as it offered a number of advantages; that it was open, nondirective and flexible; and furthermore, that it actually enabled the institutions to increase the scale and scope of their existing work. The result was that cultural activity was strengthened and enhanced, rather than being damaged, prescribed or directed, as anti-instrumental arguments assert. (ibid.: 13)

Nisbett's point may serve as a good example of how value is produced and charged by discourse. Within a political discourse, as Vestheim points out, instrumentalism is the obvious *modus operandi*. On the other hand, instrumentalism is (re)produced (Nisbett refers to the debate as well-rehearsed) in the academic discourse as innately negative. This view is, assumedly, a well-intended but naïvely uncritical reflection of the art discourse's own complex-filled relationship to instrumentalism and hereunder its relation to autonomy (well-accounted for by Røyseng (2007)).

### 2.2.1 Cultural division

As indicated above, the tension caused by instrumentalism is also central in a Norwegian context. Historically, official arguments for the inclusion of cultural cooperation in the public authorities' agenda has changed in step with changing political, social and economic realities (Lending 2000). In particular, during the 1900s most European states have been shown to be efficient in adapting their foreign cultural positions to the climate created by the two world wars and the subsequent East-West conflict (ibid.). Historically, however, the explicit aims of the MFA's policy commitment were mostly instrumental; they represented the attitude that culture could positively contribute to inter-human understanding and promoting Norwegian export and tourism (Mangset 1997, Lending 2000, Angell and Mordhorst 2014). Even so, during the 1980 and 90's two

cultural policy goals entered public policy documents, and in White paper report no. 61 1992 it was stated that foreign cultural policy also should promote “the communication of impulses and excitant to Norwegian cultural life” and “the promotion of Norwegian arts and culture internationally” (Ministry of Kulturdepartementet 1992: 117). According to Lending (2000), a third explicit policy objective also emerged during this period, namely a development policy objective; arts and culture were now seen as a means of international development aid (what is known today as the MFA’s 03-activity). In her review of the foreign cultural field from 2000, Lending summarizes this as follows:

Today, some arguments reappear in a number of countries. International cultural cooperation is i.a. expounded as

- a conflict preventing activities that promote peace and inter-human understanding
- a “door opener” for inter-governmental dialogue and minimum contact when classical diplomacy fails
- a trade policy instrument that promotes the country’s economic interests
- a part of the national self-presentation, for the global promotion of knowledge about- and positive attitudes towards the country
- a part of the internationalization of the domestic arts and culture life, through encounters with- and impulses from foreign cultures. (Lending 2000: 8)

This multiple aim agenda was not implemented or practiced problem free. In his study of the Norwegian International Art Exchange from 1997, art sociologist Per Mangset argues that within this field, several “different, internally rather consistent, clusters of values, objectives and ideas” appear, of which it would be “reasonable to speak about different ideologies” (1997: 91). Theoretically leaning on the works of Escarpit (1971) and Bourdieu (2000 [1993]), Mangset distinguishes between three such ideologies, an *instrumental*, an *elitist* and an *egalitarian-corporative* ideology. Because this review is particularly relevant to this thesis, a further look at it seems worthwhile:

The instrumental ideology, Mangset argues, “primarily finds its spokesmen in the MFA, in the diplomacy, and in the business world” (ibid.: 92):

By “instrumental ideology,” I mean an ideology which considers culture as an instrument for achieving non-cultural objectives, for instance economic growth. How much is official international cultural co-operation influenced by an instrumental ideology? In a way, it is obvious that it must be considerably influenced by it. When this kind of “cultural diplomacy” between countries increased after the Second World War, one of the main objectives was precisely to achieve non-cultural objectives, such as international conflict solution, peace and increased trade between countries. So the policy was very instrumental right from the beginning.

On the other hand, the elitist ideology is mainly found in “major arts institutions, especially those which are, or look upon themselves as, Norwegian satellites of an international elitist system of arts institutions” (ibid.: 92). It hence characterizes certain parts of the art field, particularly actors who themselves have experienced international success (for example the Norwegian Museum of Contemporary Art or the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra). However, elitism also marks the MFA, as according to Mangset, they cultivate a strong belief in high quality as a means of optimizing instrumental effects. The elitist ideology closely relates to general trends in the international art field, with a focus on a high artistic quality, selected through a network of reputable gatekeepers. According to Mangset, spokespersons of the elitist ideology are anti-corporative, strongly opposing “the idea that the professional artists' organisations should play an important role in official cooperation with foreign countries. [...] For these informants, it is important to give priority to the 'few champions' instead of the 'broad variety'” (ibid.: 94). Support to artists with international ambitions hence tends to follow a so-called *locomotive-strategy*, favoring artists with existing success in high status arenas. The idea is that such artists within the scope of their mere activity pave the way for other upcoming stars, as international interest is now pointed in the direction of Norway.

Finally, Mangset also found a third ideology related to a set of renowned Norwegian and Nordic cultural policy ideas of egalitarianism and corporatism. Key content within this ideology are democratic notions of quality, emphasizing diversity and equality (in terms of gender, sub-genre, regional origin, etc.), thus favoring a narrative focused on presenting distinct Norwegian cultural and artistic peculiarities, rather than the ability to prevail in international formal and informal art “competitions.” Therefore, “[s]pokesmen of the egalitarian-corporative ideology stress that Norway should attend to a broad variety of artistic expressions in its international cultural strategy” (ibid.: 92). Hence, central discursive elements were a claim for “fair” – at least from a democratic point of view – selections of artists who were to receive support, emphasizing diversity

and domestic merits equally as high or above success within international elitist networks.

In his study, although taking several reservations, when referring to the nuances within his empirical material, Mangset further relates the three leading ideologies of foreign cultural affairs to three appurtenant *communication networks*:

It seems from my empirical material that there are (at least) three distinct networks of international cultural co-operation, i.e. three distinct communication systems for the production, distribution and consumption of the arts internationally. The three networks correspond more or less directly to the three ideologies that I have described above. In addition, each network is characterised by specific evaluation criteria, judges of quality, strategies of promotion, and arenas of distribution. Now, I could have named the three networks in the same way as the three ideologies, i.e. an a) elitist, b) an egalitarian-corporative and c) an instrumental network. But for the sake of intellectual mystification I have invented three new names, i.e. a) the impresario-curator network, b) the extended-enthusiast network, and c) the foreign-diplomatic network. (Mangset 1997: 96)

The impresario-curator network mostly consisted of internationally oriented and competent agents, characterized by their knowing or even “embodiment” of how tough the international art scene really is, and how much it takes to break through. The reason that they possessed this knowledge was that they themselves had contributed to such breakthroughs, being involved in one way or another with artists who have had success abroad. The status and gravity allowing for their bold claims was of course determined by the status in the international art world of the arenas they had attended.

Moreover, the extended-enthusiast network consisted of organizations and artists working internationally, often as a result of an ideological, reciprocal cooperation outside of, or in spite of commercial flows and logics. Their motivation was mainly their desire to meet new audiences, colleagues, peers and critics, and not to build powerful professional networks fit to produce shooting stars. Likewise, they were skeptical about to entering into a diplomatic flow, which according to Mangset, they saw as “a limited ‘embassy ghetto’” (1997: 99).

Lastly, the foreign-diplomatic network described an MFA-internal system of cultural exchange based on what the MFA perceived as the existing needs of their field. In particular, examples could be large single initiatives capable of branding Norwegian art

and culture and promoting general Norwegian interests, as well as cultural campaigns organized by individual embassies (especially the large ones).

Mangset's typology and the conflict lines between the different groupings clearly relate to tensions on contested values and interests, many directly connected to instrumentalism issues. Moreover, a second cause of conflict also reported in this study is the one growing out of a dispute over competence issues and to what extent the MFA maintains an arm's length distance to the field it serves. In the following section, this is discussed.

### **2.3 Competence (at an arm's length distance)**

As both Minnaert and Mangset's quote in the introduction to this chapter shows, one of the continuous tensions within foreign cultural policy (as it is in cultural policy) connects to the problem of competence, i.e. who holds THE necessary competence to be working directly with culture and art questions on an operational level. According to Mangset, at the end of the 1990s the conflict regarding this problem in the Norwegian case involved, "[t]he balance between central political and bureaucratic control and delegation of responsibility to cultural institutions and organisations. This may also be seen as a manifestation of the 'arm's length problem' in this field" (Mangset 1997: 90). Moreover, Mangset asserted:

There is a cultural competence problem, which is related to the previous problem of central control versus delegation. Is a bureaucratic ministry, and especially a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose main responsibility is not culture, competent to make good judgements about cultural matters, or should more responsibility be delegated to institutions and bodies with specialist competence in cultural matters, such as the major art museums, professional artists' organisations, etc.? (ibid.)

Just three years later, in a review of the Norwegian foreign cultural policy field, Lending concluded much the same thing (2000). Communication between the MFA and the art field lacked respect, while the competence level on cultural matters among the MFA staff was insufficient, she reported (ibid.).

Questions on who is to make important artistic assessments is one of the most important and most frequently debated issues in the cultural policy literature, calling for

debates over both a broad spectrum of art sociology issues on the power of definition and status hierarchies, and questions more specifically about the implementation of an *arm's length principle*. According to Chartrand and McCaughey (1989), arm's length is a public policy principle applied in law, politics and economics in most Western societies. Because of its widespread use, the way it is interpreted and applied varies between different fields and spheres. Within the arts, an arm's length mostly represents the distance maintained between the part that passes a policy and the part that gets to decide who is to benefit from it on an individual level (Mangset 2009). A common example is the Arts council model, in which the funds for art allocated by the government to art and artists are largely dispersed through external, individual expert committees. Thus, the government largely gets to decide the scope and direction of the funding, whereas experts see to it that the quality of the recipients of the funding is as good as possible.

An important backdrop to the conflicts that Mangset demonstrates was a lack of this arm's length. According to him, the ministry had little contact with the arts field up until the millennium, and to no significant degree made use of external expertise in the administration of the foreign cultural policy. Selections on what art or which artists were officially to represent Norway abroad were hence handed over to diplomats, who often chose their own favorite classical musicians or figurative painters to give embassy concerts or exhibitions. Needless to say, such a selection process (or display of taste for that matter) was incompatible with an art discourse full of internal rules and conventions making up a sophisticated hierarchy of taste and selection privileges (these questions are particularly well covered in e.g. Becker 1984, Bourdieu 1980, 1984, 2000 [1993], Solhjell and Øien 2012).

In his review of the Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA) from 2004, Berkaak includes one example that particularly well illustrates how the ministries of culture and foreign affairs on the one hand, and the OCA on the other, negotiated the arm's length principle in a discussion over the organization's name (Berkaak 2004). In 2002, its name was changed from Norwegian Contemporary Art (NOCA) to the Office for Contemporary

Art Norway (OCA). Both ministries were initially against the change of names, but finally accepted it without too much fuss. The initiative to the change came originally from the curators of OCA, who claimed that the organization had to appear as “institutionally smart” by signaling a distance from national promotion strategies overly adopted in present Nordic practice (ibid.: 41). In contrast, they paid much more attention to how the name would be perceived in a professional and international contemporary art context. To operate with a national label, they claimed, would therefore deprive the office of the possibility to appear as an “independent player” (ibid.: 41). At first sight, Berkaak asserts, this change seems rather insignificant. However, at closer range, it implies a radically different art (cultural) policy view than the instrumental and pragmatic policies underlying ministerial export- and promotion-oriented strategies (ibid.). The same view explains the art field’s pre-2003 desire to move power over profile and priorities to an arm’s length from the ministries themselves, particularly the MFA.

As described by Berkaak (2004) and Røyseng and Haugsevje (2013) in the case of OCA, and Rimberg (2006) and Hylland and Berge (2012) in the case of Norwegian foreign cultural policy more generally, from around the new millennium the practice where the MFA had most of the operational responsibility for the Norwegian foreign cultural profile changed considerably. In 2003, the MFA decided to initiate a three-year pilot, in which the ministry delegated a significant portion of their cultural policy administration responsibility and budgets to a number of Norwegian art organizations. According to Berkaak (2004), the direct reason for this operation was to induce the arm’s length principle to the field of foreign cultural policy.

As Rimberg (2006) asserts, this outsourcing of administrative power happened gradually, covering the different sub-genres within the art field in more or less three consecutive steps. As early as in 2001, the Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA), a Norwegian “export” office for the visual arts, had been launched with funding from both the MFA and the Ministry of Culture (Berkaak 2004, Røyseng and Haugsevje 2013). In many ways, OCA became the model over which the rest of the advisory organizations were molded. So, in 2003 the responsibility for allocating travel grants and serving the



MFA expert advice in professional art issues were formally delegated to three sub-fields within the art field (ibid.). Here, the performing arts field, the music field and the contemporary crafts field adopted OCA's pilot model, through the establishment of cooperation agreements, grant allocations with fixed deadlines and expert committees' selections, administrated respectively by the Performing Arts Hub Norway (PAHN), Music Information Center Norway (MIC Norway) and the Norwegian Association for Arts and Crafts (NK). In 2004, it was architecture and design's turn, managed by The Foundation for Design and Architecture in Norway. NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad) and the Norwegian Film Institute (NFI), which at that time had already played a vital role as promoters of Norwegian literature and film abroad for some time, NORLA from 1978, NFI from 2001 (albeit sorted under the Ministry of Culture). In 2004 (literature) and 2005 (film), however, this work was further formalized through the establishment of cooperation agreements with the MFA, consecutive deadlines for funding and administrative quality assessments of projects. The administration was placed at NORLA and NFI (Rimberg 2006, Hylland and Berge 2012). By 2004, the MFA had then seemingly "lost" or "given away" almost all of their operational power to a decentralized model involving seven organizations in the art field.

## 2.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have tried to establish a firmer picture of how foreign cultural policy with its central problems and challenges relates to existing cultural policy research. The purpose has not been to establish one understanding of foreign cultural affairs – *my* understanding – but rather to touch on some of the ongoing debates that define the field and the discourse, as a basis to draw on in later analyses. In particular, it has been important to present how the cultural policy research field relates to issues like the potential meaning of complex terms and concepts such as culture and policy, as well as what different views or perspectives exist in terms of what content and purpose lie in international cultural policies. Also, because culture is claimed to have certain values, what value is it that we are talking about? And, lastly, since foreign cultural policy, at least in a wide sense of the policy concept, is molded and operated in a broad social

arena, who is seen as capable or competent to shape national cultural profiles, i.e. who should hold power in the field of foreign cultural policy?

The problems and key issues that were discussed in this chapter, along with my own empirical data, constitute the main empirical basis of the thesis. As much of it is interesting and relevant, the primary problem in my view is that the empirical scope of most cultural policy research has been confined to national, domestic objects. Moreover, as cultural policy has been seen as a part of a foreign policy discourse, discussions have either been reduced to whether or not instrumental aims and strategies have caused potential harm to the arts, or to what extent such cultural diplomacy can or has reduced geopolitical tensions and conflicts. The following analysis will both depart from and draw on this empirical basis, as it seeks to capture both the wider and deeper picture of how cultural affairs are conceived, legitimized and operationalized within, but not exclusively, the Norwegian case.

However, before I reach the analyses chapters, I now move on to discuss how the research object is to be analytically approached from the overarching theoretical perspective of the project, discourse analysis.

### **3. The discursive approach to cultural policy**

The main analytical approach to my analysis of foreign cultural policy goes through an overarching theoretical framework and perspective that is roughly captured within the concept of *discourse studies* or a *discursive approach*. As indicated by its name, this approach seeks to analyze social meaning, causal relationships and power structures through analyzing the discourse underlying all social fields. As noted in the introduction, the field of foreign cultural policy also relates to one or several discourses, systems of meaning and reasons that determine not only how different agents tend to see and reproduce ideas of reason and knowledge, but even the link from such rationales to actual practice. Central to this theory is the premise that discourse holds a number of authoritative – by some termed hegemonic – positions, that at specific points in time and place, whether conscious or not, have the power to define what is meaningful, true or valuable.

In this chapter, the aim is therefore to present an analytical model that will inform my later analyses, that is, my preferred approach to how the empirical material is most fruitfully interpreted in terms of how certain (foreign) cultural policy ideas, texts, practices and even objects have authority, and what consequences such authority may have on policies and on governance. As asserted in the introduction, the field of foreign cultural policy can be seen as a policy field of a truly specific density. Most prominently, this relates to the special geopolitical graveness associated with foreign policy and diplomacy, and the important character national interests have, both in terms of economic and political interests. In such an empirical landscape, discourse studies, with their focus on power and hegemony, constitute an especially interesting analytical tool. Also, because the concept of value is so central to artistic and cultural work, how such value is produced is of great interest. For this, the discursive approach works particularly well.

While studies of discourse represent great opportunities, discourse analysis, particularly in a Foucauldian sense, has also met criticism for neglecting the acting subject in favor

of a strict determining structure (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). My approach complies with such an objection to the extent that it more than an explicitly Foucauldian analysis perhaps would have allowed, in line with the ideas of, e.g. Jennifer Milliken (1999), opens for individual agency. This principally builds on seeing discourse as more *dynamic* in the sense of being receptive to changes produced by agents that negotiate the terms on which their thinking and practice are based. Hence, this could perhaps best be described as a type of relative agency, placed somewhere between the full individual freedom seen in rational choice theory and the firmly structural ideas of Foucauldian discourse analysis. Here, I draw on analytical help from cultural sociology, i.a. Alexander (2003) and Swidler's (1986, 2001) theories on cultural repertoires. In cultural sociology, subjects are ascribed more agency, as structural determination is replaced with subjective self-determination based on an individual cultural configuration, rather than discursively given subject positions. This perspective seems particularly relevant, as the study aims at looking into the relationship between individual, institutional and even national agency.

The principal aim of this adaption of discourse theory is primarily to open for a wider subject-position framework, which allows for specific forms of entrepreneurial behavior that I believe to have been found in the empirical material. In my opinion, it thus represents a careful but necessary adaption of theory, although still far from a more radical turn associated with moving in the direction of, e.g. grounded theory. The discourse theorists that I lean on are consequently carefully selected to sustain and support my semi-free application of discourse analysis. Therefore, central scholars like Milliken, Lähdesmäki, Shapiro, Neumann, etc., all represent a similarly pragmatic discourse study orientation, open to both micro level studies and acting subjects.

The further discussions of the chapter particularly aspire to explain firstly what is meant by the concept of discourse and secondly how, to what degree and by which forms it structures social reason, reflection and action. More specifically, the aim is to suggest a basic framework for how social meaning (like what is seen as reasonable to include in a concept such as "high quality art" or "national repertoire") and practice (how it is seen

as acceptable to act out international cultural exchange or cooperation) is produced, i.e. articulated, negotiated and/or altered. The theory chapter thus focuses on how cultural policy research relates to such a discursive approach, aiming to establish an analytically fruitful dialogue between the empirical object, the academic discipline of cultural policy research and the principal perspectives of the grand theory.

### 3.1 Discourse and discourse analysis

Before I engage in an outline of the discursive approach, and the key theoretical and epistemological premises that sustain it, I would like to direct attention to an event that took place in Oslo in March 2013. With noticeable pomp and circumstance given the, after all, relative unimportance of the policy paper,<sup>18</sup> three ministers from the respective ministries of culture, development aid and foreign affairs presented White paper report no. 19, which was about the Government's foreign cultural policy (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013). At the presentation, Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide stated that Norway over the past years had grown into a considerable global player, punching above its weight, were the exact words he used, with reference to the nation's relatively small population. He argued for this claim by referring to the importance of Norwegian development aid, the success of certain technology exports, the promotional value of the Nordic political model, and finally the success of Norwegian art and artists such as Edvard Munch and Bjarne Melgaard.

I found this claim interesting, particularly the phrase about *punching above its weight*. This was both because of the expressive metaphor use, likening foreign policy and state relations to a boxing match, but also because at the same time it seemed a bit out of touch with reality. After all, to most people around the globe, Norway is *not* a major player, most people do not even know that Norway exists (Thorkildsen and Kavli 2009).

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<sup>18</sup> The presentation took place at the office of Music Norway, with hired bands, drinks, canapés and a relatively large amount of national media present.

Besides, I later found out that this was not even the minister's own choice of words. Or, at least the British think tank DEMOS had already used them in 2007 in a report on public diplomacy and soft power. One of the chapters in the report was commissioned by the Norwegian state, reviewing Norway's global position. It stated i.a.:

In recent years, Norway has pursued a more integrated policy of cultural diplomacy. Many of the major organisations involved, including Visit Norway, Innovation Norway and NORAD (the development agency), have consistent typefaces, imagery, and so forth. A glance at [www.norway.org.uk/](http://www.norway.org.uk/) shows how highly focused and strategic the Norwegian approach is. The distillation of a series of messages about Norway – embodying notions of a clean environment, wilderness, brave explorers like Nansen and hi-tech modern design – combines to enable Norway to *punch above its weight* in the international arena. Norway has played a notable role as a peace broker and negotiator and has a reputation as a generous aid donor. (Bound, Briggs et al. 2007: 91-92. Italic set by author)

Eide's parlance, and how it relates to DEMOS' report prose, illustrates one of the most prominent points in discourse studies, namely that *how* we talk about things does not neutrally reflect the thing in question, but rather actively produces them. The main rationality is that discourses produce – more or less directly, more or less literally – reason and knowledge (e.g. aesthetic or quality conceptions), subjects (e.g. roles or occupations) and objects and sites (e.g. art arenas). According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 1), “underlying the word ‘discourse’ is the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life, familiar examples being ‘medical discourse’ and ‘political discourse’.” Moreover, the example illustrates how certain powerful phrases, often in the form of metaphors, images or narratives, tend to circulate the language that surrounds certain social domains, in this case foreign cultural policy.

One of discourse analysis' strengths is its ability to reveal how fundamental rationalities and belief systems/actions are produced and negotiated within the discourse. If we accept the idea that discourses produce social meaning, the discursive approach represents a theoretical framework well-suited to understanding how this acts out within different analytical contexts. In this case, it directs attention to foreign cultural policy and how it is produced, both as rationalities and materiality, and finally as practices. Rationalities in this case are legitimate and authoritative ways of thinking of such policies, for example causal relations between value and quality and success rate

as cultural export products. Materiality is texts, objects and sites that represent such ways of thinking, e.g. the systems that provide for cultural export to take place: the travel grant scheme, the expert visit program or the MFA program/scheme at the annual Venice Biennale. Finally, practices are hence seemingly rational actions following from seemingly rational thinking, e.g. how diplomats and art organization representatives act out the expectations that the policies produce.

This analytical approach concurrently relates to the empirical object of the study, policy texts (what bureaucrats, cultural workers and artists write), interviews, speeches and media statements (what they say) and observation of practice (what they do and how they operate professionally). More specifically, the discursive approach is well-suited to respond to the research problem of this study: how culture and cultural policy is *conceived, legitimated and operationalized* in foreign policy.

Over the next sections, I will elaborate on the brief outline of discourse and discourse analysis that was introduced above, seeking to develop it into a full analytical framework, feasible for analyzing the empirical material of this study. This presentation and discussion is divided into three parts.

First, discourse is explained in terms of *a system of signification*. A principal aspect of the discursive approach is its social constructivist (anti-essentialist) stance, i.e. the view that social meaning is socially constructed through systems of signification, in which language is the most important of these systems. Because what is considered reasonable or true is discursively constructed, discourse analysis is consequently a way of deconstructing such processes, most prominently in order to reveal both explicit and implicit power structures and causal relations.

According to this first premise, discourses are productive. Secondly, I therefore discuss *how they are productive*, linking systems of signification to practice. Such production includes, i.a. rationality and systems of truth, individual and collective social positions (subject positions and social roles), narratives designed to legitimize positions and interests, and physical objects and sites.

Finally, I claim that practices dialectically take on positions of power in hierarchized social rooms. Here, I turn to *how discourse itself is produced, reproduced and changed*, specifically examining what interests are in a position to do so, and how. The focus here is on the knowledge/power nexus that characterizes such discursive meaning and reason-production, taking as its starting point the idea that rather than being fixed entities social and cultural meaning are temporary regimes, defined by dominant positions or interests of the discourse. From this perspective, foreign cultural policy discourse open for- and close down how people tend to think of and act in foreign policy questions or questions regarding international art.

### 3.1.1 Systems of signification

To analyze a discourse, it is necessary to ask what a discourse is. As is the case with many theoretical or abstract concepts, a discourse holds different meanings and definitions within different contexts, disciplines and levels of both society and science. For example, whereas discourse could mean one thing in colloquial speech, it means something different in academia. And while it could mean one thing in linguistics or literary studies, it means something different within social science. In part, this is the result of the term's etymological status: in most Latin languages, discourse holds a meaning close to the one of a *conversation* or *dialogue*. It is also partly the result of a multi- or transdisciplinary popularity, in which the widespread use within different scientific domains has consequently resulted in a variety of different generic meanings (Neumann 2001). According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 1), in scientific texts and debates, the concept of discourse, "is used indiscriminately, often without being defined. The concept has become vague, either meaning almost nothing, or being used with more precise, but rather different, meanings in different contexts." It is therefore with this implicit warning that I turn to the use of a discursive approach.



Despite this abundance of sources and applications of discourse, some being highly influential,<sup>19</sup> to engage in discourse analysis without in one way or another involving the works of the French philosopher and social scientist Michel Foucault seems impossible (Hook 2001, Barker 2003, Storey 2009). Foucault's perhaps most developed outline of a theoretical and methodological concept of discourse is found in *The Archeology of Knowledge* (2002), first published in 1969. Here, Foucault famously defines discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (ibid.: 53pp.). This definition elegantly captures the dialectic modality of discourses, i.e. the idea that both constitute practice and are constituted by it, and that this production by- and of discourse happens through language. As Breeze (2011: 497) puts it: "In Foucault's view, discourse moves back and forth, both reflecting and constructing the social world of the different agents who use it, or are situated by it." How we comprehend the world (or a specific part of it), how we speak of it and act in response to it, greatly depends on discourse, as it suggests potential, legitimate ways of thinking and acting. In that regard, discourse has a potential for normality in relation to a specific social realm. Consequently, a discourse represents a system of reference, a way of speaking of a social object, used in a specific context. Lähdesmäki (2011) emphasizes discourses as specific representations of reality, in particular pointing out how such representations produce the ideas, mental images, notions and expectations that relate to- and denote identity in a complex ways. Moreover, she points to how discourses "indicate the power positions and hierarchies intertwined in the use of language and meaning-making processes" (ibid.: 60). Discourses thus regulate what is considered meaningful or rational, and how this rationality is transformed into practices through a number of eligible positions and finely tuned power structures.

Let us now circle in on discourse theory in a foreign policy context. In her article, *The Study of Discourse in International Relations*, Jennifer Milliken (1999) argues that despite

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<sup>19</sup> For example, an approach to the discourse term within the discipline of linguistics would inevitably involve the seminal works of Ferdinand de Saussure.

its heterogeneous nature, studies of discourses adhere to a shared argumentation format, demarcating the program as a scholarly discipline. Perhaps the most important common interest unifying discourse analysis Milliken claims is their interest to, and here she is quoting George (1994), “illustrate how ... textual and social processes are intrinsically connected and to describe, in specific contexts, the implications of this connection for the way we think and act in the contemporary world” (ibid.: 225). According to Milliken, three specific theoretical claims generally sustain this common interest. First, discourses are *systems of signification* which construct social realities (Milliken 1999). In this meaning, discourse operates as “background capacities for persons to differentiate and identifying things, giving them taken-for-granted qualities and attributes and relating them to other objects” (ibid.: 231). As Shapiro observes:

As background capacities, though, discourses do not exist “out there” in the world; rather, they are structures that are actualized in their regular use by people of discursively ordered relationships in “ready-at-hand language practices” or other modes of signification. (Shapiro, 1989: 11 in Milliken 1999: 231)

However, a central premise to this claim is a constructivist understanding of meaning, emphasizing “[social] reality as constructions produced in language, interaction and social practices” (Lähdesmäki 2011: 60). The constructivist position implies holding social and cultural meaning and their representations to be processes (of construction, maintenance and defense of meaning) rather than stable truths in an essentialistic ontological meaning. Consequently, social meaning holds no intrinsic, subjective value, but is ascribed so through processes of discursive construction. Or, as Milliken (1999: 229) asserts, “things do not mean (the material world does not convey meaning); rather, people construct the meaning of things, using sign systems (predominately, but not exclusively linguistic).” As indicated by Milliken, in the production of social meaning, language plays a crucially important role. As illustrated in the Minister Eide example above, and as pointed out by Jørgensen and Philips, “our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations but, rather, play an active role in creating and changing them” (2002: 1).

Second, Milliken argues, *discourses are productive*. The point here is that “... beyond giving a language for speaking about (analysing, classifying) phenomena, discourses make intelligible some ways of being in, and acting towards, the world, and of operationalizing particular ‘regimes of truth’ while excluding other possible modes of identity and action” (ibid.: 229). Most prominently, discourse produces: a) *subjects authorized to speak and to act*, b) *knowledgeable practices*, c) the *social space* that is organized and controlled through such practices, and finally d) *publics (audiences) for authorized actors*, and their *common sense*. According to Milliken, the latter refers to the society (groups of individuals) towards which authorized subjects turn in order to both practice and acknowledge their position. The example Milliken uses is how society expects the civil servant (e.g. a diplomat) to serve a greater good. Hence, Milliken concludes that:

Throughout, discourses are understood to work to define and to enable, and also to silence and to exclude, for example, by limiting and restricting authorities and experts to some groups, but not others, endorsing a certain common sense, but making other modes of categorizing and judging meaningless impracticable, inadequate or otherwise disqualified. (1999: 229)

Most importantly, this means that the discourse has the power to give authority to certain texts, narratives, institutions, roles, values or interests, which in social life will dominate over alternative texts, narratives, institutions, roles, etc., consequently making them relevant and legitimate frameworks for action. As a result, discourses produce who is at liberty to speak and act (and who is to listen and desist from action), what practices are normal or moral, and finally, how places and objects should be designed and interpreted (Shapiro 1981, Ball 1990, Breeze 2011, Neumann 2011).

Finally, Milliken claims that:

... even if dominating discourses are “grids of intelligibility” for large numbers of people, the third theoretical commitment is to [see] all discourses as being unstable grids, requiring work to “articulate” and “rearticulate” their knowledges and identities (to fix the “regime of truth”) and open-ended meshes, making discourses changeable and in fact historically contingent. (Milliken 1999: 230)

Milliken refers to these processes as *the play of practice*, roughly corresponding to what in a Gramscian sense could be referred to as discursive negotiations (Gramsci 1971). The

point is that since values and ideas are social constructs, interests with different forms of power will strategically seek (temporarily) to claim power over the definition of these values and ideas. However, this point is widely made within a broad spectrum of social science disciplinary approaches. What the discursive approach brings in that is new is the claim that such struggles between interests are much more sophisticated in relation to forms and uses of power than traditional top-down perspectives, seeing power as more or less exclusively dispersed in the hands of a ruling class, individuals or institutions (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). The final point should serve as a reminder of the second special interest of discourse studies, which connects to how such social representations produced in language are tied to power structures and hegemonic ideologies and practices, positions and interests.

### 3.1.2 How to analyze discourse

It is, I believe, uncontroversial to claim that over the past decades, both the concept of discourse and discourse studies has firmly established itself as a distinct and dynamic approach within the field of humanities and social sciences (Milliken 1999, Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, Barker 2003, Breeze 2011). There are many reasons for this position: its inter-disciplinary nature, its theoretical open-mindedness and curiosity, its ambition to encompass increasingly complex cultural realms, and its inclination to critical analyses, all have been suggested as contributing factors; perhaps even its alleged notorious indecisive character, which contributes to an appreciated flexibility and openness to various uses. Consequently, despite facing an ardent critique, i.a. for being theoretically vague and methodologically astringent (Blommaert 2001, Antaki, Billig et al. 2003, Widdowson 2008), discourse analysis has become well-established both within the academic field of Cultural Policy Research (e.g. Bennett 1995, Lähdesmäki 2011, Minnaert 2012) and International Relations, as well as foreign policy studies (e.g. Neumann 1996, Milliken 1999, Waever 2002).

Because I wish to analyze foreign cultural policy as discourse, it is essential to identify and explain what such an approach implies methodically. However, as indicated above,

that is not an entirely straightforward task. First, as argued by, e.g. Phillips and Hardy (2002), it is difficult to specify discourse analysis as a method in the traditional sense. Instead, discursive approaches are more to be likened with fundamental theoretical perspectives or ways of thinking, and methodology more than a method. Moreover, growing out of a plurality of theoretical and methodological schools or disciplines, the study of discourse today is not comprised by a standard theoretical or methodological how to do it manual (Milliken 1999).

As indicated several times already, despite being theoretically indebted to the works of Michel Foucault, this study is not a study in a (strict) Foucauldian sense. One reason for this is its *micro*-level rather than (typical Foucauldian) macro-level orientation. Since the empirical object of the research is the MFA and its explicit cultural policy engagement, the study places itself within what is often referred to as a micro-level discourse study (Shaw and Bailey 2009).<sup>20</sup> Such studies commonly emphasize micro-level interaction within institutional frames, or such institutions' connections with broader social and cultural contexts. "The starting point for such studies," according to Shaw and Bailey, "is that discourse guides certain ways of talking about a topic, defining 'acceptable' ways to talk, write or conduct oneself and that this can serve a range of social functions" (ibid.: 415). The micro-level approach consequently fits well with my analysis of a governmental ministry and its relationship with its art world partners.

As for macro-level approaches, Shaw and Bailey write:

Macro-level approaches, such as the Foucauldian approach, tend to involve the study of language and ideology in society. The starting point is a concern with the role of power and knowledge in society, identifying patterns of language, demonstrating how they constitute aspects of society and establishing how and why the language available to us sets limits on what it is (and is not) possible to think, say and do. Analytic approaches can "deconstruct" or unravel taken-for-granted assumptions, understand what these assumptions might mean for individuals and wider society and explore possible alternatives to accepted ways of doing things. (2009: 415)

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<sup>20</sup> Actually, Shaw and Bailey call it meso-level studies, as micro-level is reserved for more conversation-oriented approaches. However, in my case it makes more sense to distinguish between studies of institutions and organizations as micro-oriented, as opposed to Foucauldian-oriented approaches.

Consequently, as Clare O'Farrell (2005:53) asserts, “[o]ne does not simply ‘apply’, Foucault's method in the same way that one applies ethnomethodology and other sociological methods [...],” partly because it is hard at all to find an analytical “method” in his comprehensive body of work. As often pointed out, Foucault’s ambitious project of mapping meta-historic developments of establishing hegemonic conceptions of knowledge – the genealogy of knowledge and power – is not easily transformed to contingent analyses of singular institutions, sectors or phenomena (Hook 2001).

On the other hand, that does not mean that Foucault’s ideas do not bear value to a micro-oriented discourse study like mine. They do, but as O'Farrell asserts, then the:

[m]ost actual “applications” of Foucault's method really amount to the transfer, via a process of analogy, of his concrete ideas about specific historical situations to other situations. [...] These kinds of applications do not involve the imposition of an abstract universal or scientific template, rather they involve argument by analogy and comparison. (2005: 53)

Also in social sciences more generally, the relationship between macro and micro perspectives, i.e. between large-scale social structures and everyday interaction, has been subject to frequent debate. One aspect of this has been whether it is desirable or (even) possible or not to analyze a social phenomenon by reducing it to a function of a macro perspective or vice versa. However, as Silverman (1989: 70) argues:

It is misleading to assume that a fundamental choice must be made between these perspectives. While research data are often mainly gathered at either a structural or at an interactional level, sound analysis and intelligent conceptualisation requires that both levels (and their relations) should be addressed. [...] although the levels cannot be reduced to one another, each presupposes the other.

One perspective that fruitfully connects micro- and macro-level approaches is to see foreign cultural policy in both abstract and concrete terms. In the first case, as a social sector discourse entangled in other macro-level discourses, such as, e.g. foreign affairs, Norway’s international relations and responsibilities, etc. At the same time, this institution forms a concrete expression through a physical, economic and juridical organization or body: a ministry, a diplomacy, an administration that is part of a public administration, and so on. A discursive approach is hence well-suited to display agents of various types – individuals, organizations, governmental bodies, institutions, etc. – as

fundamentally interdependent; they are opposing each other but at the same time constituting each other, fighting for mutual profits but also, by doing so, defining profit from loss, negotiating discursive borders and thus fixating the premises of demarcation.

### 3.2 Discursive production

In the empirical analyses of this thesis, I claim that socially constituting ideas like value, quality or identity are produced discursively. Consequently, and as indicated above, studies of discourse fundamentally take as a starting point the premise that discourses in different ways structure social thinking and action, i.e. that they are productive. Moreover, since the practice they produce somehow seems to repeat itself, they are *reproductive*. A central question that arises from this is: What specifically is produced and how?

Jennifer Milliken specifically deals with this question in her approach to International Relations, dividing discursive production into four modes or categories. First, she maintains that a discourse produces *subjects* “authorized to speak and to act (e.g. foreign policy officials, defence intellectuals, development experts) and ‘the relations within which they see and are seen by each other and in terms of which they conduct the ... business with respect to that issue-area’ (Keeley, 1990: 92)” (1999: 229). Here, Milliken’s *subject authorized to speak and act* equals what Foucault would term a subject position, a position that we are invited to occupy and that consequently enables, constrains and constitutes how it is seen as justifiable to think and act within the specific framework from which the position emanates (Storey 2006).

Second, discourse defines “*knowledgeable practices* by these subjects towards the objects which the discourse defines, rendering logical and proper interventions of different kinds, disciplining techniques and practices, and other modes of implementing a discursively constructed analysis” (ibid.). Thirdly, according to Milliken, discourse defines and structures *the social space* in which the logical and proper interventions of subjects and practices take place. This is what some other discourse analysts refer to as

the *materiality* of the discourse (e.g. Neumann 2001), i.e. the material conditions that is both produced and produces the special framework for social action. Notably, social space is organized and controlled according to the discursive activity, making, e.g. physical environments or objects meaningful. Finally, Milliken asserts the significance for the legitimacy of international practices:

is that discourses produce as subjects *publics (audiences) for authorized actors*, and their *common sense* of the existence and quality of different phenomena and of how public officials should act for them and in their name (e.g. to secure the state, to aid others). (ibid.: 229)

Discourses thus produce (enable, constrain and constitute) context-specific point of views that further structure not only the action we take according to such views, but also how we arrange the physical environment and surroundings in which these practices take place, including both other people and groups of people (audiences) and physical objects and sites. Hence, positions, actions and surroundings only become meaningful to us through discourse.

An interesting and important point, however, is that such point of views are not stable in the sense that positions and their approaches towards practice are set. Rather, they are context-sensitive, or sensitive to what discourse is entered into by the subject. Storey (2006) uses film as an example, which is relevant as it connects to the cultural policy theme of this thesis. According to Storey, film may potentially be defined or interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the perspective from which such an interpretation is done. For example, while the economist tends to see film as a commodity, the literary scholar will tend to see film as an artistic text, the historian as a historical document, the cultural study scholar as an example of popular culture, etc. Storey's point is hence that "[e]ach discipline speaks about film in a particular way and in so doing it enables and constrains what can be said about film. But they do not just speak about film; by constructing film as a particular object of study, they constitute film as a specific reality (The real meaning of film)" (2006: 101).

This example is convertible to foreign cultural policy. Different agents, institutions, organizations, etc. will relate to foreign cultural policy in specific ways that are defined



by the discourse to which they relate in the actual setting. Consequently, artists will tend to see foreign cultural policy in terms of an art discourse, which for example emphasizes culture as an aim in itself and cultural policy as the means of obtaining this intrinsic aim (Holden 2005, Røyseng 2007). By contrast, foreign policy officials will tend to see culture and cultural policy as instruments capable of obtaining foreign policy goals. Economists will tend to see it as an object of international trade, whereas the marketing consultant will see it as a way of producing effective trademarks of various sorts. Here, the discursively produced legitimate practices resemble what in other social theory is referred to as ideology, however without the somewhat static character of the latter term. Contrary to ideology, discourse regulates meaning production in more specific senses, as the result of not only changing social frameworks, but also what position we take within such frameworks.

Finally, discourse produces spaces and objects. According to discourse theory, neither physical objects, arenas nor sites exist as neutral conveyers of meaning. Instead, they are discursively brought to life and charged with value. Moreover, because this production is process, the objects are open to a steady stream of meaning *recharging* (Shapiro 1981, Bloor 1999, Barker 2003, Storey 2009). The focus on discourse as a producer of material social meaning, not the object itself, dismisses potential critiques regarding philosophical problems of reference, i.e. accusations that discourse approaches (in their most relativistic forms) deny the existence of a material world outside of its linguistic representations. (cf. Neumann 2001). In that remark, it denotes an approach that holds a pragmatic character.

Within the field of foreign cultural policy, the examples of objects and sites that actively influence on the production of art, and thus are relevant for cultural policy analyses, are almost infinite. The most ardent academic interest has perhaps been directed towards places, institutions or physical objects of specific cultural, economic or political significance, and towards how they potentially charge objects and agents with meaning. Prominent efforts have of course been made by art sociology classics such as Bourdieu (1984) or Becker (1984), but contemporary analyses of, e.g. world heritage sites

(Johansson 2015), urban regeneration (García 2004), European Culture Capitols (Richards 2000, Bergsgard, Jøsendal et al. 2010), mega-events (Roche 1998) or art institutions (Rauen 2001) are also relevant. In her research of cultural mega-events as spatial platforms for global cultural policy, Beatriz García (2004, 2016) reviews the value sites and spaces ascribed, particularly within medial contexts. Here, she describes how objects and sites, both strategically and unintentionally (e.g. because of the course of history), have been charged with value. In an enjoyable empirical example dealing with The Olympic Games, García writes:

... the most broadly revered event editions have been those able to produce iconic imagery that works simultaneously across local and global communities of interest. One of the best known examples is that of competing divers at the Barcelona 1992 Games: the divers plunged into the pool with the city skyline, dominated by the recognisable towers of the Sagrada Familia, as background. This became the most iconic image of the 1992 Games and projected Barcelona as a globally desirable cultural centre. It was the result of an architectural decision, involving a roofless Olympic diving pool set on top of the Montjuic hill, a well-known and locally appreciated location that also hosted the main stadium. The outcome was the production of powerful city images fully integrated within the competitions broadcast to exemplify the idea that the city was a key protagonist within the sporting mega-event. (García 2016)

Within foreign cultural policy, there are several examples similar to those of García. Similar to the world of sports, the art world also has its own mega-events and superstar institutions, with their appurtenant spatial moorings, like the Venice Biennale or MoMA in New York, two of the sites included in the empirical material of this study. The relative symbolic importance of such key events within the international arts discourse is a function of a constantly ongoing discursive work. As with the Foreign Service, sites and objects are also potentially ascribed both symbolic and *formal* value, such as for example Foreign Service missions with their residencies for receptions and work dinners (cf. Neumann 2011). Particularly interesting, perhaps, is the role of the Foreign Service mission. At an analytical level, they should be seen as the site of important discursive practice within foreign (cultural) affairs, physically opening or closing for activities. The missions' situation, often in the most attractive parts of important cities, is well-capable of causing instrumental effects upon their inhabitants and visitors. Lastly, as we discuss how objects are discursively produced, this does not have to be monumental buildings, art arenas, even cities or regions. Such objects may well be small items of symbolic or

formal significance, such as the Norwegian salmon on the platter at an Embassy reception.

### 3.2.1 Subject positions and the problem of agency

A central problem to social science is how to approach the concept of agency, i.e. social agents' capacity, under various contexts, to act independently and to make their own free choices (Barker 2008). In other words, what cultural factors or structures cause people to act as they do, and what is the nature of this capacity? Within discourse theory, discourses not only produce the world through providing systems for signification, they also "make intelligible some ways of being in, and acting towards, the world, and of operationalizing particular 'regime of truth' while excluding other possible modes of identity and action" (Milliken 1999: 229). In discourse studies, these "ways" are most commonly referred to as *subject positions*, hence representing a prominent component of a discursive approach's theory of action. As both Lähdesmäki (2011) and Singh (2010) point out, they relate closely to the concept of identity and identity production or -narration (cf. Goffman 1969, Bhabha 1990). In this section, I elaborate on this potential for individual and collective action. The object of this twist is to open for a more active subject that is found in the empirical material of the thesis, more specifically a subject that negotiates the terms of the structures, from which more or less locked positions emanate. As a response to the structure-agent problem, I include the additional and partly challenging perspective of cultural sociology into this discussion, asking: How can a (more) active subject be legitimate within a discourse theory framework?

The basic idea of the subject position is that it both enables and constrains how different agents engage socially, e.g. in cultural policy practice. As discourses produce legitimate ways of seeing the world as meaningful, these valuations are linked to positions that efficiently, though in various degrees and forms, convey such representations of the meaning into individual or institutional action. Since they represent an epistemological position that promotes a decentralized identity, individuals and institutions are believed

to be able to dynamically hold a number of positions simultaneously, despite some of them being potentially inconsistent or contradictory. As such, positional framings are more or less known and internalized; people will tend to enter them more or less consciously. Some features of the subject position will be obvious to the subject that enters it, like authenticity being a basic feature for an artist (regardless of genre or style), or flexibility and pragmatism being basic features for diplomats, linking values to subject positions. Other features or values come with positions in more unconscious or covert forms, produced, and thus identifiable, through a complex and often sophisticated cultural interplay. That is the reason why different roles or points of views sometime offer rationalities (often just in the form of moral sentiments or hunches) that remain vague and unexplainable, even to the ones who take them.

From a wide range of features characterizing subject positions, two in particular arguably stand out. First, subject positions are all about *integration*. This means that while it is possible in principle for anyone to enter a subject position (some take formal validation, though, like the subject positions police or doctor), they are entered in different degrees or conviction. Here, they resemble Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1984), as in some cases they will relate to incorporated practices. The most interesting thing analytically with this way of seeing the formation of meaning, and its transition to practice, is that it highlights how being "in" a discourse sets the stage for quite specific ways of conduct or behavior. Subject positions are regulatory roles that come with specific latent and manifest expectations, both in relation to how to reason and how to act in different situations. Within a foreign policy discourse, one example is how the subject position *diplomat* states the frame for not only sensible, but also acceptable conduct. The same is true with artists; being a true artist requires certain patterns of action in order to be perceived as serious, professional, morally true (authentic), etc.

Secondly, subject positions are *negotiable*. Deviating from the mainstream notions of the subject position increasingly results in confusion and frustration until the point where – as the agent leaves the subject position completely – the artist is no longer seen as an artist, and therefore loses the privileges of that position. Deviation hence comes

with an (increasingly high) cost. Still, as the power of definition to state the mainstream is never completely set, deviation is also in discursive play, which is part of what Milliken calls *the play of practice* (1999). This means that they are not stable or fixed entities. The notion of an entrepreneur will therefore mean something different within business than it does within the arts or diplomacy.

Since discourses are held to produce action, not individuals themselves, discursive approaches in research potentially hold a problematic contradiction, on the one side operating with a strategic and active subject (for example the entrepreneur) and on the other with a subject that is deprived of agency. This position relates to a central philosophical problem within theory of action, which is subject to a long ongoing debate within academia, also known as the structure-agent problem. Placing different theoretical positions along a continuum of agency, from structural determination on one extreme to rational choice and full individual freedom on the other, discourse studies tend to place themselves somewhere on the structure side (Neumann 1996).

Contrary to rational choice-oriented theories, which ideally see agency as decision-making based on an infinite number of choices, in which the best ones seem evident to an autonomous subject,<sup>21</sup> as discourse theory holds that the discourse determines what is possible or meaningful to say or do. Consequently, agency, in a rational choice meaning, is somewhat of an illusion. Alternatively, discourses conceal their structuring power by appearing as evident, as common sense, as a *delusion*. This rejection of active subjects has met considerable opposition, not least, as some see it as a rejection of personal responsibility and therefore a surrender to fatalism. This view also raises an epistemological problem. Since agents themselves do not necessarily “see” the scope or causes of their actions, what for example gives the researcher insight into such processes? Within social research, this is a problem because it implies the idea that a

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<sup>21</sup> Obviously, rational choice theories have also met critique, not least for being highly theoretical (the number of choices possible is so vastly high that no one could ever overview them as rationally as suggested), in addition to its failure to adequately explain the many irrational choices made.

researcher is inclined to detect intentions or causes of action that the subject of the research does not see him/herself (Silverman 1989).

The neighboring discipline Cultural Sociology, relates to the concept of agency somewhat differently, potentially representing an interesting add-on to discursive approaches to the structure-agent problem. According to cultural sociologists, culture has a transformative power, and is of particular interest in forming identities. Especially because it is fueled by technology, culture opens for identity formations that enable new and more open discursive positions (cf. for example, Swidler 2001, Alexander 2003, Singh 2010). Jeffrey Alexander argues that "... every action, no matter how instrumental, reflexive, or coerced vis-à-vis its external environments is embedded to some extent in a horizon of affect and meaning" (2003: 12). This *internal environment*, he goes on, "is one toward which the actor can never be fully instrumental or reflexive. It is, rather, an ideal resource that partially enables and partially constrains action, providing for both routine and creativity and allowing for the reproduction and transformation of structure" (ibid.). This agency also counts collectively:

Similarly, a belief in the possibility of a cultural sociology implies that institutions, no matter how impersonal or technocratic, have an ideal foundation that fundamentally shapes their organization and goals and provides the structured context for debates over their legitimation. (ibid.)

Where a sociology of culture holds that culture should be treated as a dependent variable in cultural sociology, it is held to be "an 'independent variable' that possesses a relative autonomy in shaping actions and institutions, providing inputs every bit as vital as more material or instrumental forces" (ibid.). From a distance, Alexander admits, the two are similar, as they share a common conceptual repertoire of terms like values, codes and discourses, and both argue for the importance of culture to society. Yet, the resemblance, he claims, is superficial. With reference to- and inspiration from Bloor's *Strong Program* of the philosophy (sociology, really) of science (1999), Alexander distances his theories from that of the sociology of culture by introducing a strong program for a sociological study of culture. "Such an initiative argues for a sharp analytical uncoupling of culture from social structure, which is what we mean by cultural autonomy" (Alexander 2003: 12). A dependent variable is most commonly seen as an

output, while an independent variable is the input or cause that in itself leads to an effect. According to Alexander, a weak program of a sociology of culture, on the contrary, sees culture as an output of determining social structures. Treated as an independent variable, culture is itself the cause of these structures.

Also, Jeffrey Alexander, not unlike many discourse studies, takes the idea that peculiar social structures extensively determine social action as his point of departure. However, where discourse theory mostly adheres to the idea of a decentralized subject, Alexander takes on a more pragmatic view in terms of a subject with an active agency. Here, he is inspired by Talcott Parsons' synthesis between structural determination and individual agency, holding people as both freely acting, rational agents *and* subjects, determined by external social and physical conditions beyond the subject's full control. Alexander writes, "We are not anywhere as reasonable or rational or sensible as we would like to think. We still lead lives dictated more by unconscious than conscious reason. We are still compelled by feelings of the heart and the fearful instincts of the gut" (Alexander 2003: 3). He holds that what is considered socially meaningful and necessary – like morals (of what to have a conscience and loyalty about), values (what is good and evil) and identity (who are friends and enemies) – effectively constrains but also enables agency and consequently regulates society (ibid.). This echoes the discursive principle of power as being woven into social practice in complex and unpredictable ways, not least giving life and energy to social practice itself:

... for without such structures society cannot survive. We need myths if we are to transcend the banality of material life. We need narratives if we are to make progress and experience tragedy. We need to divide the sacred from the profane if we are to pursue the good and protect ourselves from evil. (ibid.: 3)

In short, we all are subjected to social structures, "'larger' and more 'powerful' than mere individual human beings" (Alexander 2003: 4), which determine how we act and what we say, that we are not ourselves the master of (or, we are subjected to conditions that we do not survey).

Cultural sociologists maintain that there is a vast potential for inputs to identity formation within cultures. In the article Culture in Action, Ann Swidler claims that

“[c]ulture influences action not by providing the ultimate values toward which action is oriented, but by shaping a repertoire or ‘tool kit’ of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct ‘strategies of action’” (1986: 273). Here, Swidler argues that people have a rich repertoire of cultural ballast, from which they motivate and explain their actions. The theory is dynamic in the sense that it opens for such action to be internally inconsistent. This feature is an important premise in the argument that traditional sociology, holding that action follows from cultural values is misleading. Rather, she insists, choices are made despite values. Why is this? Because, Swidler argues, people base their actions on a richer repertoire than values alone. Interests come from a range of alternative “identities,” depending on context.

In my view it is analytically rewarding that identity here resembles a rough synonym to what is described above as subject positions. Examples are social roles like being a diplomat, artist or any of the former operating as a cultural entrepreneur at the New York Arts Book Fair at MoMA in New York, at NORLA’s international translator festival, the Venice Biennale or at Øya International in Oslo. These are all discursively construed identities, with input from a variety of cultural resources configured into certain discursive positions. However, the cultural repertoire theory develops discourse theory further. It changes scope from a focus predominately on structural instrumental power towards individual agency. Here, agency is a much more active act of choice, as different positions build on a complex mix or configuration of cultural input.

Prominently, Swidler points out two modes of cultural basis from which action takes place, *Settled Culture* and *Unsettled Culture* (ibid.). On an individual level, settled culture reflects the deep structures forming the person’s stable worldview. The unsettled culture represents less stable perspectives, but one on the other hand of a higher intensity. In terms of identity, the difference between the two could be illustrated by: a) being a country girl (settled), and b) being a senior officer (unsettled). Within the first, culture rests as an embodied sentiment underlying thoughts and actions in a quite remote and subtle way, while it in the latter case finds forceful outlets in professional actions taken in accordance with professional strategies. Where the former represents



tradition and common sense, the latter represents ideology or professional positions. The first structure is deep, but weak in its capacity for producing action. The latter, by contrast, represents stronger control over action, but is at the same time more volatile, in the sense that it is easier made an object of change. Where settled culture connects to sometimes embodied perspectives, sentiments, emotions and points of view, potentially stretching back to early upbringing and socialization, unsettled culture connects to political and ideological positions, of which as we know people enter and leave regardless of the strength of the position while holding it.

Swidler uses the metaphor of a toolbox in order to explain how subjects reach out for meaningful options for social action. Such processes are to various degrees conscious. Additionally, they are operated at both individual and collective levels. Before moving on to discuss one particular social position, with a specific inherent toolbox or (discursively given) potential for action – *the entrepreneur* – I would like briefly to explicate the latter.

In the same way that individuals relate their practices to discourse or culture, collectives subjects do too. Brief examples are organizations or institutions, like the MFA or one of its advisory organizations in the art field,<sup>22</sup> The Norwegian National Museum or MoMA, etc., and even nations like Norway. Both on an individual and institutional level, Swidler's ideas represent interesting ways or strategies for analyses. In the case of an institution, a toolbox or a repertoire of potential legitimate responses applying in various time-space-contexts works in a similar way, and consequently, the organization operates with both a settled and an unsettled culture, influencing both individual and collective processes of action. Practices (also best practices) are sometimes maintained despite the fact that a new political order instructs otherwise, just because they connect to settled cultures on both individual and institutional levels. As the bureaucracy, especially the extremely loyal foreign ministry, would very seldom openly oppose its

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Chapter 5.3.1

political leaders, such practices are negotiated within the many systems of policymaking and implementation that exist. Where the settled culture depicts traditions and norms, the unsettled culture represents current policy.

As Neumann (2011) demonstrates, based on his comprehensive empirical analyses of diplomacy, traditions and conventions play a particularly important role in foreign policies, because history and continuation are such an important part of this field's self-image. Neumann argues that the discursive elements influencing on this image is so strong that it severely affects the decision-making of the ministry, regardless of which political party is holding power (ibid.). However, not least, the empirical data of this study shows that the current political leadership does have an important influence on the work of the bureaucracy. Thus, it makes perfect sense to be talking about the unsettled culture as the part of the departmental practice that relates to its surroundings. These surroundings shift; still, the force they represent is strong. Any foreign ministry not taking notice from its current political leadership would be considered unfit for their work. On the other hand, no political position can alter the fact that a ministry represents a considerable share of resistance, insofar that they stay responsible to a long line of leaderships.

A second example of a collective agency relates to nations. Starting out from Swidler and Alexander's repertoire theory, proposing "a theoretical approach for comparative cultural sociology to analyze national cultural differences," sociologists Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot (2000: 1) launched the concept of *national cultural repertoires*. In line with Swidler, Lamont and Thévenot regard such repertoires as "elementary grammars that can be available across situations, and that preexist individuals, although they are transformed and made salient by individuals" (ibid.: 5-6). Applying such an analytical concept will, and even more so within a discursive approach, have to come with a warning about not ascribing essential and stereotypical roles to obviously heterogeneous collectives such as entire nations.

### 3.3 Play of practice

The introduction of an active subject and agency opens for a discourse that is not only determining, but that also is receptive to impulses that are potential game-changers. This is important, as it consequently allows for more rapid and dynamic changes of discursive production through processes where agents negotiate the structures that hold authoritative positions in defining ideas, actions and materiality (cf. above). Any attention to agency in the form of knowledgeable practices, cultural repertoires or other analytical approaches hence soon urges the analyst to look at not only how discourse produces, but also how discourse itself is produced.

First, discourses, even according to a traditional Foucauldian definition of the approach, do not exist *ex nihilo*, meaning that even though some discourses take on tautological characters (like e.g. the discourse on moral), they do have births and ends (Foucault 2002). Still. The most common is that they are in transition between more or less actual forms – e.g. that foreign cultural policy emerges from a longer existing foreign policy discourse, which again emerged from state discourse, etc. (Neumann 2001). The emergence of discourse hence shares similar features with the sociological concept of system differentiation.

As argued by Milliken (1999), even though dominant discourses constitute seemingly enduring grids of intelligibility for large numbers of people, these grids are inevitably unstable. Because meaning is socially produced, it is also reproduced, modified or ultimately changed. Consequently, in order to maintain their temporary stability, “working to articulate and rearticulate their knowledges and identities (to fix the regime of truth) and open-ended meshes, making discourses changeable and in fact historically contingent,” is required (ibid.: 230). As Storey (2006) asserts, different social fields will be interpreted differently, depending on whom you ask and from what perspective you take. Therefore, international arts, diplomacy and foreign policy (or for that matter the related tourism, international trade or migration) all constitute social fields in which different discourses intersect and interact with different and (often) competing

conceptions for the rules of the field. The understanding of a field or a discourse's true content and limits is thus the subject of constant negotiations. According to Doty (1996: 6), a discourse's exterior limits:

... are constituted by other discourses that are themselves also open, inherently unstable, and always in the process of being articulated. This understanding of discourse implies an overlapping quality to different discourses. Any fixing of a discourse and the identities that are constructed by it can only be of a partial nature. It is the overflowing and incomplete nature of discourses that opens up spaces for change, discontinuity, and variation.

Different strategies of establishing or maintaining knowledge and (their subsequent) knowledgeable practices as dominant within a discourse take on vastly different and diverse forms. One characteristic, however, that should be stressed is that such strategies' tendency to take shape as *negotiations*. Their form is often suggestive, and not least rhetorical. In the empirical analysis, especially those found in Chapter 7, the discussions repeatedly focus on how a national identity or cultural profile is discursively produced, often through specific self-images or stories. One particularly interesting strategy that connects both to an image and a rhetorical production is that of *narration* (Bhabha 1990). Its function is to validate and legitimize social positions, practices and/or ideas through the production of specific cultural narratives. Such narratives often prove effective in evoking emotions in addition to, or as well as, reason. This is perhaps why society today, and mass media in particular, are so overwhelmingly interested, almost obsessed with stories and storytelling. Hence, the narration from politics via infotainment to entertainment has taken on a prominent place as a marketing strategy. The productive power of narration assumedly is why Milliken calls focus to:

how [discourses] selectively constitutes some and not others as "privileged storytellers ... to whom narrative authority ... is granted," how it renders logical and proper certain policies by authorities and in the implementation of those policies shapes and changes people's modes and conditions of living. (Milliken 1999: 236)

Within (foreign) cultural policy, the notion of aesthetic (high) quality (or authenticity, which is really two sides of the same coin) is an illustrative example of an unquestionable premise in any debate. While one may debate what such quality is, no one questions that it has a dominant position as a premise of the debate itself. To alter this status would therefore take an enormous amount of discursive work.

However, the use of the term *negotiation* in the production of discourse is potentially confusing. Negotiating is normally seen as an act of two or more parts carried out in symmetric forms, in which initiatives and responses are interrelated in internally coherent and logical patterns, following patterns or rules of how to engage. On the other side, discursive negotiations do not always consist of specific opposing agents. Instead, discursive articulations – more or less conscious attempts to fixate specific perspectives as self-evident – are often uttered not as a response, but as proactive acts aimed at establishing (or preparing for establishing) a relative control or command over the agenda. According to political scientist Carol Bacchi, political problems should not be one-dimensionally seen as responses to problems that arise; rather, “‘problems’ are ‘created’ or ‘given shape’ in the very policy proposals that are offered as ‘responses’” (Bacchi 2000: 48). The goal of discursive negotiation is hence to set and control the agenda of the social space in which it engages, ultimately seeking a hegemonic position for specific ideas and practices (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). Such negotiating strategies are widely found within my empirical data, and theories of discursive negotiations will therefore play an important analytical part of the following empirical analyses.

The concept of discursive negotiations, and the claim that such negotiations grow out of opposing claims for hegemony over how a discursive field is conceived of and acted on, highlight an active theory on power. In the following, the concept of discursive power is outlined and discussed, particularly in terms of *structural power* – power that works through structures, i.e. the contexts of actions and interpretations, rather than the structural control of resources by individuals with static institutional authority (Foucault 1983, Strange 1998).

### 3.3.1 The knowledge/power nexus

On several levels, a study of foreign cultural policy runs into the concept of power: Firstly, because policy and politics are principally about power, e.g. in relation to how different governmental, institutional and individual powers enforce specific political, social or aesthetic values and standards at the cost of others. The second is because

policy at a number of levels inevitably has to deal with power in various forms and of various degrees of sophistication. This ranges from how policy signals like the ones that come in governmental fiscal budget propositions explicitly and unconcealed (however sometimes with unintended side-effects) enforce political gains and losses to everything from art organizations to diplomatic priorities, to how structural forms of power often work in concealed ways, though somewhat unpredictably, but often efficiently.

A discussion of power is particularly relevant in relation to discursive approaches to policy, as power is seen not only as a means of persuasion or the capacity to bring about consequences (Weber 1971, Neumann 2001, Nisbett 2016), but also as a central premise of establishing knowledge itself (Foucault 2002). Consequently, the power concept relates to how views, interests and ideologies are played out, dealing with the very core of how social meaning, such as for example – and highly relevant to this study – cultural value, quality and authenticity are proposed and defended. In this respect, discourse analysis is an explicit analysis of power.

As indicated in the introduction, within a discursive approach power is not seen as a one-dimensional force that regulates the actions of one part as the cause of the rulings of another only. Instead, power is fundamentally related to knowledge production, and in many cases discourse is synonymous with knowledge through specific power-knowledge regimes. Consequently, the deconstruction of discourses could be described as processes in which the relationship between the object regulated by the discourse and the power-knowledge regime linked to it are revealed. As Foucault maintains, this is not primarily done through examining *what* is said about a practice – “whether one asserts its importance or denies its effects,” – but through:

... account[ing] for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue, briefly, is the over-all “discursive fact,” the way in which [the practice] is “put into discourse.” (1978: 11)

In discourse analysis, it is consequently essential “to locate the forms of power, the channels it takes, and the discourses it permeates in order to reach the most tenuous and individual modes of behavior...” and “to bring out the ‘will to knowledge’ that serves

as both [the discourse's and its power effects'] support and their instrument" (ibid.: 11-12). Being able to analyze how power is taken into use means taking action to find out what central values and value assessments dominate a social field, and by which interests and positions they are played out. An analysis of power within the field of foreign cultural policy, however, particularly since the MFA is a central empirical object, should not fail to acknowledge that power in a more traditional sense plays an important role in public governance. As a result, in the following both relational and structural power are in focus.

According to the political sociologist Steven Lukes, power comes in three interrelated and concurrently working dimensions, all of which are present in the field of foreign cultural policy. The first dimension refers to explicit and unconcealed capacities to bring about consequences, i.e. the power of A to get B to do something they would not otherwise do (1998), or what is often referred to as *relational power* (Weber 1971, Strange 1998). While open and direct, and thus not always particularly effective<sup>23</sup> as Melissa Nisbett argues, such a use of power still "takes a prominent role in public decision-making" (Nisbett 2016: 114). In foreign cultural policy, e.g. relational power describes the hierarchical power that characterizes the home office's relationship to the Foreign Service, and thus the power over diplomacy's working agenda.

Post-Weberian social theory, e.g. within the study of cultural policy, foreign policy and International Relations (e.g. Krasner 1985, Guzzini 1993, Strange 1998, Volgy and Imwalle 2000), has however been occupied with complimentary perspectives, most prominently in relation to what has become known as *structural power*. According to Strange (1998: 25):

Structural power, in short, confers the power to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to each other, relate to people, or relate to corporate

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<sup>23</sup> Anyone who followed the political process prior to UK's "Brexit" from the European Union in 2016 would surely agree. It should serve as a textbook example of how governmental power is unsuccessfully applied.

enterprises. The relative power of each party in a relationship is more or less, if one party is also determining the surrounding structure of the relationship.

Especially important was Strange's view that states' bi- and multi-lateral relations are regulated by more than the material factors from which they act (e.g. economic or military resources).

As far-reaching structural conditions related to historic, social and cultural determinants, in which institutions and states are embedded, tacitly shape and influence the relationship between states, the power to set this agenda and define the rules of the game (Krasner 1985) is central (Strange 1998). Consequently, as Wolf argues, structural power is "power manifest in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains, but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and that specifies the direction and distribution of energy flows" (1999: 5).

In line with this, Lukes' second dimension refers to having power over setting the agenda on which decisions are made (Lukes 2005). As argued by Nisbett (2016: 115):

... this is not just about who makes the decisions, but who decides what decisions are to be made in the first place. In other words, who gets to decide what gets decided. It was Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz (1962) who developed this notion in their influential essay, the Two Faces of Power, which differentiated between overt and covert forms. The aim of the second dimension of power is to maintain the status quo, so that those in power stay in power and continue to have their interests served.

Consequently, this power form takes on a more indirect character. In his third dimension, Lukes directs attention to uses of power that are *not* recognized, and thus not experienced as uses of power by the ones exposed to it (Lukes 2005). Central to this theory is that power is most efficient when the subjects do not recognize or know of it. As Nisbett asserts, Lukes' third power dimension refers to "one that involved people having their beliefs and preferences shaped and affected by the powerful, often without them even realizing" (2016: 115). Lukes himself asks rhetorically:

Indeed, is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have — that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? [...] is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? (Lukes 2005: 28)



Here, Lukes' theory intersects with another much referred theory of structural power, Joseph Nye's aforementioned concept of *soft power*, describing the ability of one country to shape the preferences of another (that preference of course being favorable for the first) (Nye 2004).

In his theoretical work, Lukes clearly builds on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, denoting the success of the dominant classes in presenting their definition of reality, their view of the world, in such a way that it is accepted by other classes as "common sense" (Gramsci 1971).<sup>24</sup> Even though Gramsci's hegemony concept was originally applied within a national context, an extensive number of approaches related to- or building on this concept have also been applied within an international context. In international cultural relations, such defining power would for example be the ability to set the rules according to which values are seen as valid (e.g. Western, liberal or democratic values, what is seen as naturally good or aesthetically beautiful), agents or interests holding legitimacy (i.e. that are seen capable of- or legitimate in order to operationalize legitimate values), etc. One way of setting such rules is by being the authority that decides on what cultural stories should be told about a nation. Hence, to be responsible for shaping important narratives – e.g. that Norway is a peace-loving, a little bit odd but a smart, egalitarian and culturally educated nation (even though we are on the outskirts of Europe both geographically and culturally) – and to be responsible for the instruments that are central to such constructional work (e.g. art) is an important component of power.

A fourth dimension of power, one that is working structurally, but without a clear source of intention pinned down to a specific agent in power, is captured in Foucault's concept of *governmentality*. Governmentality refers to:

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<sup>24</sup> Gramsci's theory of hegemony further holds asserts that since society is constituted not by one single dominant class, but rather a shifting and unstable alliance of different social classes, hegemony should be viewed as an ideal typical state, never achieved by one class or group, but rather the object of numerous and continues struggle (Gramsci 1971).

... the way in which people are taught to govern themselves, shifting power from a center authority, like a state or institution, and dispersing it among a population. Governmentality can therefore be understood as how conduct is shaped, making “the art of governing” and embodied experience. According to Foucault, governmentality allows for the creation of “docile bodies” to be used in modern economic and political institutions.

Foucault’s concept, thus, resembles the idea that governance at its most effective implies making individuals or groups act in desirable ways through attraction rather than coercion, i.e. a convergence of interests of both the governing and the governed part (Gordon, Burchell et al. 1991). A frequently used example (i.a. used by Foucault) relates to how neoliberal states sophisticatedly govern its population through producing consumers who demand a social system that complies with their consumer desires, and therefore want what the government wants (Dean 2009, Foucault 2010). An example perhaps more relevant to my empirical analyses, and frequently found in this study’s empirical material, relates to patriotism, a sentiment that definitely runs the interest of nations, while at the same time seen as rewarding to the individual or group of individuals. This type of governance is hard to pinpoint to any direct or explicit governmental action or use of power, even though it could indirectly be seen as a desirable effect from successful national identity production.

An important consequence of the theory of structural power is its turn away from its close ties to specific agents and institutions. Here, power becomes interesting not only as a top-down means of coercion that regulates hierarchized (first-dimension) power between A and B. Instead, attention is directed towards an omnipresent power that circulates and works throughout social interaction and discourse. In modern societies and institutions, power is not something simply held by certain individuals, groups or communities. It is woven into all social structures, where it produces knowledge-based asymmetric relations between constantly changing groups of people (Sandmo 1999). Within this perspective, it is therefore held that structural power is *decentralized*. From this perspective, power may well be seen as both a liberating and democratizing force, a view that proves theoretically fruitful in explaining for example the transition from centralized diplomacy towards the decentralized, micro-oriented mode of modern public (cultural) diplomacy, what Hayden (2013) refers to as *the social turn* within

foreign policies. Here, as well as for governmental ministries or councils, power is ascribed to cultural expressions and artists, seen as well-fitting social agents taking part in efforts to build national images, effectively carried out as international relations strategies within a people-to-people rationality.

### 3.4 Chapter summary

Because discursive approaches provide analytically strong and productive perspectives to studies of social interaction, both theoretically and methodically, this thesis relates closely to *the concept of discourse* and to a discursive approach to cultural policy research. This preference particularly builds on the discursive approach's capacity to inform analyses and interpretations of the workings of ideology and power in society, and how these workings relate to language and discourse, which are at the same time both scientifically viable and intellectually rewarding. As the concept of power in such analyses is unconventionally broad, such analyses also help to capture a more nuanced picture of how values and profits are negotiated and fought over among the widest range of social agents, including from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, via the consul at the Consulate General in New York, to the top curator of the National Museum or the up and coming superstar artist admitted to MoMA.

The cornerstone of the discursive approach is a constructivist understanding of meaning and reason. This position implies holding social and cultural meaning, and their representations to be ongoing processes (of construction, maintenance and defense of meaning) rather than fixed truths in an essentialistic ontological meaning. Constructivism hence emphasizes social reality as constructions produced in language, interaction and social practices; discourse produces what we think of as reality.

A relevant question that arises from this position is how this production takes place. According to Storey, discourses work in three ways: they enable, they constrain and they constitute (2006). That is why I claim that discourse produces *subjects*: discursive positions that offer agents feasible frameworks for agency or *knowledgeable practices*,

operation modes that are sanctioned by the discourse and that therefore hold different degrees of authority. Finally, discourse defines and structures *the social space* in which the logical and proper interventions of subjects and practices take place. These material conditions, which are both produced and produce the special framework for social action, is what is often referred to as the *materiality* of the discourse.

As discourse is held to produce subjects, practices and materiality, at least the way we think meaningfully of these things, a final important question relating to who or what produces the producer is addressed in the chapter. As discourse presumably cannot just emerge *ex nihilo*, how is it itself produced? In the final sections of the chapter, I bring attention to how discourses themselves are constituted through more or less strategic and intentional attempts to establish and maintain hierarchical and hegemonic belief systems, and how such attempts relate to power. It particularly points out that even though dominant discourses constitute seemingly enduring grids of intelligibility for large numbers of people, these grids are inevitably unstable. Since meaning is socially produced, it is also reproduced, modified or ultimately changed. Consequently, in order to maintain their temporary stability – work to articulate and rearticulate their position, and to fix knowledge and identities, thereby making discourses changeable and historically contingent – is required.

## 4. Finding and sampling foreign cultural policy

In this chapter, I present and discuss the most important methodical and methodological aspects of this PhD project. In particular, I address questions concerning the methods that I used in order to obtain data, the value of such data (both generally and specifically in this project) and, finally, the ethics related to scientific ethnography. Firstly, framed by the concept of Multi-Sited Ethnography (Marcus 1995, 1998, Madden 2010, Coleman and Von Hellermann 2011), the method design is described and situated. As indicated by the use of the term ethnography, and not least the use of participant observation, this approach seemingly places itself within an anthropological tradition. However, originating from anthropology, the term ethnography over time has increasingly been regarded emblematic of a wider range of scholarly disciplines, according to Fangen (2010). David Silverman (1989) argues that all research that includes the observation of events and agencies in their natural habitats, and that acknowledge the mutual relationship between theory and empirical data, could be termed *ethnographical*. In line with this perspective, this project aims at adopting a multi- or interdisciplinary approach, making use of a method design that does not really originate from one, but rather from a broad range of methodological ideas within qualitative social research (Becker and Geer 1957, Becker 1977, Swidler 2001, Madden 2010, Bernard 2012, Lamont and Swidler 2014). This, I argue, reflects the academic discourse to which this project is aimed, namely that of *cultural policy research*.

The empirical material that is presented and analyzed in this thesis consists of qualitative data from participating observation, qualitative interviews and document studies. The participating observation took place at six cultural events supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) during six non-consecutive fieldwork periods throughout 2014. Three of these events were visited at the same time, and as a part of doing participating observations at the Norwegian foreign mission in the city of the event. Most of the interviews took place during the fieldwork: 24 qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with MFA employees (including both diplomats and other staff), representatives of a range of art institutions (including all the organizations that advise

the MFA on art issues), plus 110 shorter, less formal and unstructured field interviews, including many artists, cultural workers, creative business representatives, politicians and journalists/media. Document studies took place during most of the project period, i.e. from its beginning in 2013 to its end in ultimo 2016, consisting of different forms of texts, most prominently a body of gray literature (policy documents) and a selection of media texts.

Each of the six field stays took place during- or around a cultural event strategically selected from the MFA's cultural policy "portfolio." In May, I attended Norwegian Literature Abroad, NORLA's international translator seminar at the Holmen Fjordhotell in Oslo. In June, I attended the opening of the Norwegian curated exhibition at the Nordic pavilion at the Venice Biennale in Italy. In August, I participated in the International Delegate Program at the Øya Festival in Oslo (Øya International). The following three fieldwork stays were placed at three Norwegian foreign missions. In September, I spent three weeks at the Norwegian Consulate General in New York at- and around the time of the New York Art Book Fair. In October, I spent one week at the Norwegian embassy in London, while they co-hosted the release of new translations of Ibsen's plays on Penguin and (concurrently) the Ibsen season at the Barbican Center. Finally, in November I visited with the Norwegian embassy in Paris, the week they co-hosted the opening of photographer Øyvind Hjelman's exhibition at Mois de la Photo in Paris.

#### **4.1 Multi-sited research object calls for multi-sited ethnography**

To investigate the Norwegian MFA's dealings with art and culture, especially responding to their many locations (foreign missions) and operations (international projects and cooperation with artists and institutions) meant searching for an empirical method that reflects the translocational and transnational character of the research object. In the article, *Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography*, anthropologist George E. Marcus directs the focus towards what he sees as "an emergent methodological trend in anthropological research that concerns the

adaptation of long-standing modes of ethnographic practices to more complex objects of study” (1995: 95). Hence, he also claims:

Ethnography moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, such as the capitalist world system, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies such as the “local” and the “global,” [...] (ibid.).

My choice of a design with many non-consecutive fieldwork-stays, what Madden refers to as *step-in-step-out-ethnography* (2010), thus corresponded well with a *Multi-Sited Ethnography*.

Deviating from traditional ethnographic methods, primarily consisting of one long-term study where the researcher stays in a local community or a limited social setting over a longer period (cf. Powdermaker 1967, Becker 1977), this design denotes a greater flexibility (however, by no means less dedication to the empirical object). As internal (national) policies are increasingly interdependent on external (international) conditions (Singh 2010), seeing and analyzing different local contexts is concurrently important in order to produce a comprehensive and consistent data set bridging the gap between local and global. Marcus (1995) argues that multi-sited ethnography in the hands of scholars like Haraway (1991), Latour (1987) and Appadurai (1990) has “provided a complex multi-sited vision for research in this transnational domain that defies older practices of ‘locating’ culture(s) in place(s)” (1995: 104). The study of foreign (cultural) policy calls for a visitation of ethnographical sites throughout a transnational domain, so consequently a multi-sited ethnological approach is a well-suited course of methodology. Moreover, as multi-sited ethnography firmly holds its intellectual ground within “postmodern” theoretical “capital” (here Marcus particularly points out Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge) (ibid.), this framework seamlessly suits a discursive approach.

Moving from a conceptual towards a concrete, practical mode of multi-sited ethnography, Marcus suggests a number of “tracking” strategies in order to serve the purpose of giving fuller or richer descriptions of complex (decentralized) objects. He writes:

Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography [...] Multi-sited ethnographies define their objects of study through several different modes or techniques. These techniques might be understood as practices of construction through (preplanned or opportunistic) movement and of tracing within different settings of a complex cultural phenomenon given an initial, baseline conceptual identity that turns out to be contingent and malleable as one traces it. (Marcus 1995: 105-106)

Several of Marcus' suggested techniques or modes of ethnography fit this project's methodological needs and scope well. First, he suggests following *the people*. Here, the object is "to follow and stay with the movements of a particular group of initial subjects" (1995: 106). In my case, the group of subjects to follow was typically diplomats, journalists and cultural experts attending one of the two MFA initiated or supported expert travel programs I researched, or the actual artists and cultural workers themselves, as they sought foreign markets or territories. Secondly, Marcus calls on following *the thing*, in which the object is to trace "the circulation through different contexts of a manifestly material object of study (at least as initially conceived), such as commodities, gifts, money, works of arts and intellectual property (ibid.: 106-107). In the discourse approach to this project, I repeatedly refer to the concept of discursive materiality, from works of art to the actual sites (in themselves), buildings or other physical manifestations. Besides contributing to the inclusion of text in a broad sense to the analysis, it draws the focus to the actual substance of the discourse, insofar as how and by what means it operates. Following art works consequently provides an excellent opportunity to analyze how such objects are assigned meaning, value and agency within the discourse. Finally, Marcus suggests following *the metaphors, plots, stories or allegories*. He writes:

When the thing traced is within the realm of discourse and modes of thought, then the circulation of signs, symbols, and metaphors guides the design of ethnography. This mode involves trying to trace the social correlates and groundings of associations that are most clearly alive in language use and print or visual media. (1995: 108)

Closing in on textual objects in a more narrow sense than physical ones, he still seems to point towards signifying practices widely regarded as central to the discourse. A reading of this mode includes a wide range of discursive materiality, from speech acts to policy documents, making this last strategy of multi-sited ethnography thoroughly



relevant grounds for discourse analysis (cf. Prior 2000, Foucault 2002). While the main ambition of multi-sited ethnography is to suggest a new concept of ethnography, reacting to the globalized and decentralized nature of increasingly complex research objects, it does not dictate one specific method over another. Rather, as it relates strongly to an interdisciplinary social science tradition, it calls for a large degree of methodical pluralism.

Having introduced the multi-sited ethnography approach as the main methodologically strategy of the project, in the next sections I will introduce the actual sites and discuss the selection process that preceded it.

#### 4.1.1 Selecting ethnographic sites

As the main purpose of this project was to analyze rhetoric, practices and materiality within the Norwegian foreign cultural policy discourse, the methodical approach had to focus on selecting sites where such discourses were found. Because high-quality data is so important, and the amount of resources (time and money) to produce them are often scarce, selecting sites and planning ethnographic work at them well is a crucial part of research. In particular, this aspect is relevant to multi-sited ethnography, in which the number of relevant fieldwork sites could prove (substantially) higher than what is possible to visit. The ethnography in such cases has to be a *sample* (Schatzman and Strauss 1973). In this case, and in line with Marcus' (1998) multi-sited empirical strategies, this meant finding sites that could provide interaction points of people (initial subjects), things (commodities, gifts, money, works of arts and intellectual property) and texts (signs, symbols and metaphors).

I decided to visit three types of sites where I anticipated people, things and texts of the foreign cultural policy discourse would interact: foreign missions, high status cultural events and official sites of foreign art expert visits. Diplomacy is at the core of what foreign policy is all about (Neumann 2011), so from early on it seemed sensible to include foreign missions as sites of ethnographic work. Foreign missions, i.e. embassies and consulate generals, are sites that serve as prominent components of the discourse,

and which connect closely to the circulation of discursive practice and texts relevant to this study. Diplomats and locally employed staff attend them daily of course, but politicians, artists, representatives of important institutions and of the cultural and creative industry, etc. also circulate these sites regularly. Not to forget, works of art, intellectual property and policy strategies and documents are all things and texts clearly central to the foreign policy discourse.

The large number of foreign missions made a strict selection necessary, primarily based on three criteria: relevance to the MFA, personnel working with arts and culture, and, lastly, proximity to territories relevant to the arts field. Based on this, I selected the Norwegian Consulate General in New York, the Norwegian embassy in Paris and the Norwegian embassy in London.<sup>25</sup> When it comes to cultural policy, the MFA refer to the three, plus the Norwegian embassy in Berlin, as *the great four*, a nickname reflecting both the resources provided for these missions to work with culture, and within the art world. For example, in an interview at an early stage of the fieldwork, an informant from the design and architecture field stated that: “When it comes to the Foreign Service, I would recommend the Consulate General in New York. Talk to them! They are some of the most professional I have met within this field, for sure, and the most self-reflexive.”

Moreover, the countries hosting these missions all have long traditions of being among Norway’s most important and close partners, culturally, economically and politically. For example, the USA, Great Britain and France all rank high on Norway’s top-10 trade partners list,<sup>26</sup> and militarily and strategically, they are among our absolute closest allies. Relating directly to this fact, the three selected foreign missions top the MFA’s

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<sup>25</sup> Initially, I planned to visit the Norwegian embassy in Berlin, but due to practicalities I ended up terminating Berlin as a fieldwork site.

<sup>26</sup> In 2014, Great Britain was the most important export market and the fourth most important trade partner for Norwegian import. France was the fourth most important export market and the eighth most important trade country for import to Norway. The USA was the eighth most important export market and the fifth most important trade country for import to Norway (Statistics Norway 2014).

budgets for funding allocated for cultural purposes. Therefore, choosing these three would assumedly give access to Norwegian foreign cultural policy arenas of a particularly rich empirical value, in terms of both consistent and dedicated ministerial cultural policy practice and such policies' encounter with the "harder" facets of foreign policy.

The second type of site relevant to include as sites of ethnographical work was cultural events of a high quality and status. Such sites have had continuous constitutive importance to the art world as obvious scenes of artistic display and interaction, but also as containers of cultural status (Bourdieu 1984, Moulin 1992, Mangset 1997), ritual meaning (Turner 2011), economic impact (Hesmondhalgh 2013) and soft power (Nye 2004, Winter 2015). Described as sites of both concentrated and consecrated cultural meaning (Bourdieu 2000 [1993]), arts or cultural events of a high quality and status are full of discursive practice and materiality, at the conjuncture of the most relevant people, things and texts.

In order to find relevant cultural events, I initially made contact with both the MFA, the great four foreign missions and the seven art organizations that constitute the MFA's selection of advising partners within performing arts, music, architecture and design, contemporary art, arts and crafts, film and literature, requesting a list of substantial cooperation in 2014. The criteria for selection were quite simple; I looked for events of particular importance or high status in the proximate areas of the selected foreign missions. It felt important to choose events that the MFA themselves considered to be central to their work, at the same time as they were considered artistically important. Within the project as a whole, I also wanted to cover as many of the different sub-genres of the arts field as possible. Finally, I looked for events situated near the three foreign missions that I had chosen. This provided the opportunity not only to rationalize the fieldwork, but also to study the mission's cooperation and integration with the events in question. I eventually decided to visit The Architectural Department of the Norwegian National Museum's exhibition in the Nordic pavilion at the Venice Biennale, the "Norwegian room" at the New York Art Book Fair (NYABF), the Ibsen season at the

Barbican in London and photographer Øyvind Hjelmen's separate exhibition at Mois de la Photo in Paris.

Lastly, the last group of relevant, high-density sites were sites of foreign expert and press visits. Existing research of Norwegian external cultural policy (Mangset 1997, Lending 2000, Rimberg 2006, Hylland and Berge 2012) survey these scenes and the visits that occur there as both valued by their participants and analytically interesting as places with similar characteristics to festivals, i.e. places where cultural quality, status and significance, economic value and soft power potential are negotiated. These sites present and promote Norwegian art to a foreign expert audience, which means they form interesting viewpoints to the performance of Norwegian foreign cultural policy in practice. Here, I decided to visit the NORLA International Translator Conference at Holmen near Oslo and Øya International, an expert delegate program at the Øya festival in Oslo. Table 2 shows a summary of the nine fieldwork sites:

Site	Location	Responsible	Time	Duration
NORLA International Translator Conference	Oslo	NORLA	May 2015	3 days
Venice Biennale (Architecture)	Venice	The Norwegian National Museum – Architecture	June '15	4 d.
Øya International	Oslo	Music Norway/ Øya festival	August '15	4 d.
NYABF + Norwegian Consulate General	New York	Printed Matter/MoMA/ Norwegian Consulate General, MFA	September '15	21 d
Ibsen season at the Barbican + Norwegian Embassy	London	The Barbican/Penguin / Norwegian Embassy, London, MFA	October '15	6 d.
Mois de la Photo + Norwegian Embassy	Paris	Mois de la Photo /Norwegian Embassy, Paris, MFA	November '15	7 d.

Table 2: Summary of the final fieldwork sites

As stated above, selecting a specific group of sites means excluding others, and selective sampling implies a number of both pragmatic and epistemological considerations (Schatzman and Strauss 1973). A selection of foreign missions, cultural events and sites of foreign expert programs will inevitably come with the potential of a biased sample. For example, it could be questioned whether the selection of the great four (foreign missions) represents a *general* MFA approach to cultural policy. Neither staff, funding

nor ambitions compare with other, smaller foreign missions around the world. By visiting the major culture missions only, how could I make general assumptions about the MFA's foreign cultural policy? However, as argued by, e.g. Fangen (2010) and Madden (2010), procedures of selection in qualitative research do not follow the same strict rules as those within quantitative research. Social science rarely seeks representative samples in a statistical sense, as the point is not to achieve such a representation. Instead, it is to find a really good example, either one that is extreme and thus suited to pinpoint central aspects of one's research question, or one that is typical and thus suited to illustrate general or ideal types within the field of research (Lipton 1991). Clifford Geertz famously makes this point, arguing:

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz 1973: 5)

On the other hand, social science risks becoming irrelevant if it is unable to make any general claims outside of the specific social phenomena that make up the object of research. Hence, a rich empirical data set, constituted by a broad series of good examples, is often seen as a way of obtaining some general importance (Madden 2010).

A primary source of empirical data to this study is participant observation conducted at the sites listed above. In the next sections, I will discuss some of the general features and challenges of participant observation, in addition to some relating more directly to this specific project.

## 4.2 Participant observation

According to methodology literature, participant observation is widely used across social sciences, and it is commonly argued that many of anthropology and sociology's most important scientific findings have relied upon this method. Anthropologist H. Russell Bernard enthusiastically defines participant observation as a method that calls for "[...] going out and staying out, learning a new language (or a new dialect of a language you already know), and experiencing the lives of the people you are studying as much as you

can” (2012: 310-311). Still, it is important to make a distinction between participant observation and more mundane socializing. Madden argues that:

... “being with people” in ethnographic research is not simply a matter of “being” in an ordinary sense; it is not some form of unstructured “hanging out” with people. While the aim of being with people is to approximate as closely as possible the “feel” or sensibility of every-day sociality between the ethnographer and the participants, ethnographic “hanging out” is also saturated with instrumentality. It is a deliberate form of association that is targeted at gathering information germane to the research project in question. (2010: 78)

The two sociologists Becker and Geer describe participant observation as a “[...] method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher or covertly in some disguised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time” (1957: 28). From its very start, the practitioners of the method often emphasize its capacity to “find” and explain social practice from an insider (emic) perspective, in opposition to other methods unable or unwilling to depart from external or etic (supposedly stereotyped) preconceptions. Most famous is perhaps Malinowski’s claim that objectivity followed immersion (1922), i.e. the ideal of becoming as close to your research object as possible. The only way of getting a true and objective picture of a social practice was to completely immerse into it. While the potential fruitful sides to this method, given the amount and richness of the data, seem obvious, in the following I will attend to some problematic sides to this method. In particular, I will discuss whether observable practice holds an analytical value that is qualitatively different from competing methodological data (mainly interviews), and (relating to the former) whether an emic perspective, although yielding a rich insight into the beliefs of the research subjects, holds the capacity of rendering valid data for anything other than descriptive purposes.

In their methodology article advocating methodological pluralism, Lamont and Swidler (2014) warn that a blind belief in observational data misses the fact that behavior is hardly a reliable source of “true” intention, just as much as tales about it could well be rationalization strategies. The latter has been a common critique against such spoken or written data. In this project, this discussion is relevant. Positivist political science or

institutional theory often maintains that practice follows from discourse, meaning political action follows policy papers and strategies. In the case of diplomacy, a positivist position would hold that diplomats mostly intend to do as much of what is dictated to them from the home office (and that the home office mostly intends to do as much of what politicians tell them) as possible. On the other hand, voices of critical or radical sociology and anthropology have argued that this causal relation is not at all that coherent, claiming that what policy papers intend, and what is observable in practice, represents two different levels, potentially containing considerable differences between what is seen as rhetoric and political agency. This view is central within a discursive approach, in which objective structures of power are held to discursively regulate agency (Foucault 1983, 2002). Holding then that observational data fully represent intentions and strategies, and that there is a contingent line from a core intention to social action, is quite problematic. Lamont and Swidler point out the same problem, as they claim that:

Some of the debaters want to know who is tapping the most “really real,” significant reality. All the methods [...] capture realities, but the question, for example, of whether individuals have a deep, relatively unitary, motivating set of values that might be tapped by a single survey question (Vaisey 2009), or whether people have complex, contradictory motivations that might lead them to different choices at different moments, is a theoretical and empirical question that cannot be answered a priori. Indeed, methodological debates are often carried out as if there were some rock bottom “truth” that one method could capture that other methods cannot. But the naïve belief that facts speak for themselves – that, for example, if one observes a situation one knows “why” the actors acted as they did – ignores the combination of theoretical questions, careful research design, and persuasive evidence necessary for social explanation. All methods require consideration of what the observer brings to the situation and how his or her interpretations could be validated by others. (2014: 4)

Another related and seemingly much debated question relating to ethnography in general, and participant observation in particular, regards the possibility of tapping critical analyses from overly emic perspectives to social action. Or, in other words, whether social and cultural immersion opens for a sufficient critical distance to the research object. The question then is whether immersion in itself hinders the ability of bringing in external perspectives analyzing internal action. There is no doubt that deep knowledge about the research object is favorable to the research. The question is rather whether this proximity in some way also has the capacity of polluting data. Being an insider means getting and understanding information that the outsider would not get or

understand. Still, there is a danger that this same insidership will prevent the researcher from seeing that he or she is losing the necessary critical distance, adopting internal world-views, no any longer as a source of analytical data, but as internalized personal beliefs (Silverman 1989, Marcus 1998).

To this discussion, a brief personal reflection seems relevant. As a former cultural worker in an art organization<sup>27</sup> in 2007, the MFA appointed me a member to the support program for international art and culture collaboration's expert committee, allocating travel funding to Norwegian musicians traveling abroad, a position I held for several years. No doubt, this experience gave me inside knowledge to practices that I find very interesting today, and that presumably would have been very difficult to obtain from an external position. In 2012, a colleague of mine and I finished an applied research project commissioned by the Norwegian MFA that evaluates the ministry's *support programs for international art and culture collaboration* and the ministry-supported export office, *Music Export Norway* (Hylland and Berge 2012). This project, which in many ways preceded this PhD project, further introduced me to many of the features of Norwegian foreign cultural policy. It meant that from the start of this current project, I had some relevant empirical data, in addition to some research experience from the field. It meant being familiar with the foreign ministry and some of its systems, routines, agendas and (not least) representatives.

Methodologically, both my former position and the latter research experience represent both advantages and challenges. Empirically, it means not only citing some interesting data (some of it, however, restricted by ethical considerations), but it also challenged the value of these data in a more profound way. Knowing informants or actors one observes in advance comes with the risk that they act or speak differently from what they would do otherwise. For example, they see you as a peer, anticipating (wrongly) that you relate to implicit or tacit knowledge (Madden 2010). An opposite danger is that

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<sup>27</sup> From 2001 to 2006, I worked as an artist promotor in a small Norwegian agency.



the researcher becomes afraid to exploit friendly relationships earned over time, and hence becomes overly servile in approaching the research object (Nader 1972), or fails to see negative sides to their meanings or actions. On the other hand, as Neumann (2001) emphasizes, observational data are never immediate, but rather mediated. As an implication, the methodological choices made are never neutral or self-evident, but instead are the result of an instrumentalization of this mediated data into strategies of data production. As Madden asserts, participant observation endorses on-site proximity, however not without a clear thought of restoring distance at a later point of the research: “The ethnographic manner of being with people is to find a way to get close, but not so close one can’t step back again” (2009: 79).

Having discussed some general methodological challenges related to ethnography, in particular participant observation and immersion at research objects and sites, I now move on to a discussion of a number of methodological challenges raised in the specific empirical material of this project. It specifically departs from some interesting aspects of doing ethnography in high-status and empowered environments, what could be referred to as *studying up*.

#### 4.2.1 Challenges coming with “studying up”

In her essay, *Up the Anthropologist – Perspectives Gained from Studying Up*, anthropologist Laura Nader (1972) addresses ethnography aimed at “studying up.” Here, Nader argues that more researchers should be studying objects and individuals of power, especially wealthy people and corporations, governmental institutions, etc.

A large part of the ethnographical work of the study, both in terms of time spent and the amount of data, was carried out at three Norwegian foreign missions. It is good fun working with the diplomacy members, but also challenging since they maintain considerable and historicized symbolic capital (Neumann 2011). Moreover, the cultural sites I visited all keep a significant status within the art world. For instance, The New York Art Book Fair is a production within the Museum of Modern Art, MoMA, in New York. This museum is a world leader within contemporary art, with all the status and

authority that comes with it (Staniszewski 2001). Analytically, these cultural places are saturated with empirical data. As with the foreign missions, these sites with all their glory, power, influence and competence could easily be regarded as objects of studying up. However, there are methodological challenges that come with this type of ethnography. In the following, I attend to some that seems particularly important, indexed under *access* and *symmetry of researcher-object-relationships*.

The most commonly referred to obstacle not only in studying up, but in ethnographic work in general, is actually acquiring access to your research object (Prior 2000, Fangen 2010, Madden 2010). Many of the problems of ethnographical fieldwork are related to being granted access (or not), and many of them have epistemological implications. Nader lists a number of things that complicate access to objects of power: “The powerful are out of reach on a number of different planes: they don’t want to be studied; it is dangerous to study the powerful; they are busy people; they are not all in one place, and so on” (1972: 302). As Nader argues, there are several forms or grounds of denied access, in which three are of particular interest: explicit access denial, structural access denial and implicit (or self-inflicted) access denial.

Explicit access denial is perhaps the most self-evident form of not getting in touch with your research object. It is simply when you are not allowed to meet people or groups of people, observe sites or read documents. Sometimes, this can be for legitimate reasons, as in cases of potential data being secret material, sensitive personal data, etc. In such cases, legal instruments in most cases will regulate access. In most cases, however, the researcher works at the mercy of the ones s/he studies. Even public servants have at their disposal a number of ways of making research difficult, so even if they are ordered to take part in research, project success depends on a relationship based on mutual trust, even more so with private companies, organizations, NGOs, etc. Gaining access often takes both building trust and negotiating terms. In my project, the sites were a combination of public or semi-public sites and private sites. Foreign missions are governmental sites, regulated by law in terms of public access, which means that access is based on a consideration between the need for security and the wish for openness. In

contrast, cultural events are mostly open to researchers, as long as the visit is well-prepared and agreed on.

Having both Mangset's problematic and conflict-oriented relationship with the MFA back in the 1990s (Mangset 1997), in addition to the general challenges coming from studying power in mind, I feared that access to people and places, particularly within the MFA and foreign missions, could prove challenging. On the other hand, personal experiences from the 2012 evaluation pointed in another, and less discouraging, direction. Again, access to the ministry and the Foreign Service proved relatively problem free, at least in terms of explicit access. I think it seemed logical to them that I wanted to continue the research on foreign cultural policy when such a possibility opened up, and they were inspired to continue the cooperation that in fact they initially started by commissioning a review of the ministry's support schemes and Music Export Norway in 2012.

*Structural access denial* mostly refers to cases in which physical structures complicate or hinder access. Security schemes at public buildings are one example, as they share the complexity of a widespread cultural event, with restricted, hierarchized VIP areas being another. Local routines, modes of security, the nature of the staff and several other variables all affected the outcome of ethnography at the foreign missions. In my case, access to the missions was granted from the leaders of each of the missions I contacted in NYC, Paris and London (and Berlin as well from the beginning). What was meant by access I later learned, was quite individual from site to site. At two missions, I was granted great freedom and even an office, which meant being able to take part in the everyday life and work, and getting to talk to people whenever I wanted about whatever I wanted. This is a great freedom, and maybe one that I did not cherish fully until I experienced the opposite. At one mission, namely, access was more limited. Not because of a deliberate denial of access, I think, but more as result of two things: at this mission they did not have any spare space for me (a desk or office as I had the other two missions), and the entrance routines of the mission were very strict. This resulted in not having any chance of wandering around, talking to people or observing what they did in

their everyday routines. As the embassy invited me to meetings and briefings, I always tried to arrive a little early and hang around for as long as I could afterwards. Even so, this potentially becomes awkward. I was happy then that I had the experience from the other missions so that I could fill in the blanks of missionary practice. This methodological mode is close to what Nader calls for in her urge to study up despite difficulties in conducting ordinary ethnography (especially traditional participant observations). At the strict mission, I redirected my attention from an in-house observation mode, rather than doing most of the observation at external, off-embassy sites, filling in with “in-house knowledge” from the other missions. Besides, much of the most important work of the diplomacy takes place in places other than the embassy or consulate, at receptions, lunch meetings, etc. As a result of the fact that access was more difficult here than in other places, instead of being a methodological problem this became an interesting analytical benefit. The question consequently arose: Why is it so much stricter here?<sup>28</sup>

Access in its simplest form allows the researcher to enter the rooms of power. Still, a more complex reading of Nader (1972) inspires an inquiry about: a) the ability the researcher has to fully understand the power structures of the object, and b) his or her ability to reveal whether information is disguised or euphemized. Even though access to the foreign missions was granted, at several stages and times during the field stays I had a feeling that I was not quite the master of the situation. This feeling appeared partly because some rooms were closed to me as a researcher, and partly as a much more subtle feeling of being introduced to empirical data that was cleverly staged by clever diplomats trained in giving the impression to people that everything is business as usual

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<sup>28</sup> In retrospect, particularly in view of the terror attacks against the Charlie Hebdo offices and the Balaclan nightclub, these security precautions appear fully justifiable. The methodological point, however, prevails; a more pragmatic (though reckless) security scheme would have eased my fieldwork, and hence the data quality of the field stay.

(even if it is not). Thus, here the myths about diplomacy worked against both diplomacy and me.

Nonetheless, access to substantial data is a matter of also having access in implicit manners. As a general access is granted, there are still various subtle, abstract, informal and conventional obstacles to full access left. This works from both the outside and inside of the ethnographer. Typical external obstacles are to not know or understand the internal codes and conventions of the research objects. Of course, this is something participant observation is meant to reveal and overcome by immersion. However, this might just be a little naïve, as some obstacles are there exactly to prevent outsiders from becoming a full member or part. Power balances work systematically in the sense that outsiders trying to get hold of it bring the system out of balance. It will then react in a way that counteracts the intrusion. Therefore, access at fancy cultural arenas are not necessarily regulated through VIP bracelets only, but also by not informing about where the important meetings are held and decisions are made, as those eligible to be there will still know it, while others will not.

The other side to the access problem at these sites is internal, and originates from or within the researcher. To him or her, this is often a question of symbolic authority to attend sites unfamiliar or incomprehensible. It is not to be mistaken with a general shyness or the tendency to be reserved in meeting new places or people, which I think everybody is, to some extent, including ethnographers. Rather, what I am thinking of is related to structural or discursive power, thereby influencing on the ability to act and think in certain environments. As discussed in the theory chapter, and as Foucault (2002) has asserted, power that is not acknowledged works perhaps just as efficiently as the one applied intentionally. That means that an important play of discursive power can take place without the participants being fully aware of what role they possess. This is of course something to which the researcher working within such an analytical framework has to keep utterly sensitive. Of course this is in the sense of being particularly observant as an interview respondent or informant claims not having power, or dismisses power as relevant in a particular situation, but also with a slight unease that

fills the ethnographer as he or she enters a room, feeling inferior although the ones there greet welcome. Such a necessary critical distance may hence turn into what in social science is referred to as the Hermeneutics of Suspicion (Gadamer 1984).

More than once during my fieldwork, I reflected on the symmetry of researcher-object-relationships, i.e. who was in most control of the research situation: the people whom I was observing or me, the observer. In her research, having observed and interviewed performing artists, the Norwegian sociologist Sigrid Røyseng (2007) writes about how she often found herself in situations where she wondered if she was the observer or the observed, the interviewer or the interviewee. This feeling of uncertainty, and thus of a slight unease, was a result of being faced with a research object that instead of responding or submitting to the conventionally superior researcher, ostentatiously started interviewing and observing Røyseng's research behavior. Røyseng's own analysis of this situation was that the artists in question were professionals in identifying and analyzing roles and characters, and thus responded to a feeling of objectification by playing with the roles of the interview. To me, Røyseng's experience resonated clearly. In most cases involving research projects, when making use of qualitative methods like observation or interviews, there will be an asymmetrical power relation between the researcher and the research subject in favor of the researcher. Consequently, there are strict ethical guidelines following such research. In my case, the power relation was more ambiguous. Diplomats, for instance, are not a particularly vulnerable group of research subjects; rather they are often highly trained and skilled in the art of negotiating, achieving the goals of their home government. According to Neumann, diplomats have traditionally had a peculiar habitus:

There is still a lingering expectation that diplomats will hail from the upper echelons of their societies, and will have the easy social ways of the naturally superior. This stereotype survives even though in the aftermath of the Second World War, bourgeois diplomats were joined by people from more humble stations and then, from the 1970s onward, by women.

This does not of course imply that the ethical standards of research do not count fully for subjects with power; it does, and as pointed out by Nader (1972), there is no need

for double standards within research. What applies for the objects of studying down also goes for the objects of studying up.

Moving along, doing participant observation with objects of power, the researcher inevitably enters their home turfs, which often means being at fancy places, possibly taking advantage of the same benefits as they enjoy. After all, that is what participating is all about. In itself, this may not be a problem. However, the risk is that the environment, ambience or pleasurable services of the research object dazzle the researcher in a way that makes him or her less critical. In my project, a couple of things made me think that this was something of which to be aware. Firstly, the sites I visited in themselves have an aura or mythical quality that could dazzle anyone. Of course, going to New York for three weeks, having a hot desk office place at your disposal, attending meetings in the consul's residence, eating lunch with representatives of the Norwegian UN delegation; all is very impressive, not to say overwhelming. The same is the case with London and Paris. The embassies, regularly situated in the most fashionable parts of the cities often see beautiful surroundings, while being occupied by successful, good looking and highly educated people. Moreover, the ways of diplomacy verge on the mythical. They spend quite a bit of their workdays at seemingly fancy lunches, making sure their opponents and partners feel well, that the conversation flows freely and that everybody is at ease. As Neumann asserts, himself a researcher who has practiced participant observation within the diplomacy, "Food, drink, setting, timing: diplomats leave none of this to chance" (Neumann 2011: 11-12). The result is therefore fieldwork situations where the researcher potentially gets sucked into the same pleasures as those prepared for regular business partners, or in other ways enjoys a surplus of diplomatic idiosyncratic hospitality. Neumann speaks from experience:

Important business calls for good eating about town. The beef tartar that I had for lunch one day in September 2001, in the dignified Library Bar of Oslo's Bristol Hotel, was certainly tasty, and the full-bodied red wine matched it well. The conversation, which turned on how to write the centenary history of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had an easy flow to it. (Neumann 2011: 11)

One episode may help illustrate this point. At the reception in Venice, held on the opening evening of the Biennale by the Norwegian Embassy in Rome for distinguished

guests, partners and media, I had already had a nice dinner in town with a glass of wine. Now, the reception left me with no choice but to take the glass with sparkling wine I was offered. The non-alcohol option was out, and I was in a hurry. No problem, it went well. I had the chance to talk to some very interesting people, with lots to say about Norwegian foreign cultural policy, among them the new director of OCA and the prominent art critic of one of Norway's largest newspaper. It was fun. It was interesting. More sparkling wine appeared. I really, honestly, did not reflect on the number until sitting in the comfortable toilet in the fancy hotel close to the Piazza San Marco, hastily trying to write field notes. I was light headed and actually had some trouble concentrating on how to formulate the experiences of the (grand) evening. Of course, situations like these could evoke questions about to what extent the researcher manages to reclaim external perspectives to the data. However, as Madden concludes:

Acknowledging the fact that the ethnographer is the primary tool of research and an active participant in the ethnographic field also means that properly confronting the influence of the ethnographer on research and representation is an unavoidable precondition of a reliable ethnographic account. (2010: 23)

This means that the ethnographer has to manage to balance the potential analytical profit of the stay with potential practical or epistemological downsides. If the researcher feels dazzled by the surroundings, so probably do other agents of the scene. If the studying up reveals strategies capable of having people look less critical upon the institutions and representatives in question, than what one would ordinarily think that this is indeed interesting data.

#### 4.2.2 Taking (field) notes

An important tool in securing data is converting observations into field notes (Madden 2010, Bernard 2012). There is a series of reasons for why making field notes is important. First, human memory is deceitful. Furthermore, good quality data may not appear obviously so in the actual observational situation. Hence, as Madden writes:

Ethnographers should strive to be systematic in the manner in which they initially inscribe, and part of the systemisation should be the attempt to reliably record what they are seeing. Field notes can and should be faithful representations of real events. However, initial inscription and note-taking is a part of the observation process, so like observation, note-taking is framed and directed by various



instrumentalities and agendas, not all of which will be obvious to the note-taking ethnographer in the moment of inscription. Ethnographers cannot write everything down, so the choices they make to record or not record information are always strategic and sometimes subjective. (2010: 118-119)

Most ethnographers seem to agree that there are at least two main types of field notes: the ones done in a hurry, on the spot, at the site – like the ones I did in the fancy toilet at the Venice hotel – often called *field jotting* (Bernard 2012). The purpose of these notes is “jotting down as much information as possible in as brief a form as possible” (Madden 2010: 123), and to capture sentiment and ambience while they are fresh.

The second type of field notes, often called proper field notes (Bernard 2012) or full field notes (Emerson et al., 1995 in Madden 2010), are the ones “that are taken at the end of a day’s work or sometime soon after an event, which expand the description and might have a more reflective and/or analytical tone” (Madden 2010: 123). There are several categories of proper field notes, sometimes mixed together in one text. Bernard (2012) calls attention to three: methodological notes, descriptive notes and analytic notes.

My own field notes consist of more than 80 full A4 pages of proper field notes, partly based on a large number of jottings, and consisting of both descriptive notes and methodological and analytic reflections. In volume, the descriptive notes dominate. Unlike some ethnographers, I did not use a list or scheme of things to note. As a result, rather than filling out a strict list of things to notice, I practiced in accordance with Bernard (2012: 398):

Whatever you observe, try to capture in field notes the details of the behavior and the environment. Try to get down “what’s going on.” Then ask informants who are watching the ceremony or process to explain what’s going on, and try to get notes down on their explanation.

As all sites were different, I instead emphasized capturing what I felt was the spirit of the site: type of environment, who was there, what happened, what were the main discussion themes, etc.

### 4.3 Interviews

In this study, an important part of the empirical data consists of semi-structured and unstructured interviews. According to Heyl (2001: 369), over the past years “an ever-

increasing number of disciplinary and applied fields have been turning to ethnographic interviewing to help gather rich, detailed data directly from participants in the social worlds under study.” Yet, the term ethnographic interview may also be slightly misleading, as it indicates a specific relationship between this method and certain social sciences. Instead, as Silverman (1989) maintains, different disciplinary use of methods, terms and strategies tend to overlap, and as argued by Lamont and Swidler (2014), to potentially supplement each other.

According to Madden, conducting ethnographic interviewing is to “interrogate in a manner that draws out descriptive (How do you ...?), structural (What’s the relationship between ...?) and comparative (What’s the difference between ...?) responses from an interviewee (Madden 2010: 73). Hence, a good ethnographic interview gives “the ethnographer insight into how a participant sees the world in analytical, typological, and relational ways, and such information helps to create an insight into the participant’s world-view” (ibid.). Moreover, it is an efficient way of avoiding misconceptions from fieldwork observations because:

[...] interviews can reveal emotional dimensions of social experience that are not often evident in behavior. Those advocating ethnography over other research methods imply that only visible, public “behavior” is somehow real, or causally significant. But for many people the imagined meanings of their activities, their self-concepts, their fantasies about themselves (and about others) are also significant, and we generally cannot get at those without asking, or at least without talking to people – although one could imagine the topic emerging spontaneously and entirely unpredictably in the course of an interaction with an ethnographer. (Lamont and Swidler 2014: 7)

Within different empirical contexts, different formats of interviews are required, ranging from completely unstructured interactions, through semi-structured situations, to highly formal interactions with respondents (Bernard 2012). In the case of this study, I used two different types of interviews, semi-structured interviews and shorter, less formal and unstructured field interviews, more specifically, 24 semi-structured and almost 110 field interviews. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews are particularly well-suited when you want to cover specific thematic areas, and when you have a limited amount of time or only one chance to talk to the informant (Bernard 2012). Besides:

Semi-structured interviewing works very well in projects where you are dealing with high-level bureaucrats and elite members of a community – people who are accustomed to efficient use of

their time. It demonstrates that you are fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves both you and your respondent free to follow new leads. (Bernard 2012: 212)

In particular, three features characterize qualitative semi-structured interviews: 1) They are often of a certain length, and thus of significant substance, 2) They evolve from a certain structure, which means that the interviewer has some control over the data collection. Mostly, “[...] semi-structured interviewing is based on the use of an interview guide. This is a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order” (Bernard 2012: 212). However, the term *semi* indicates that this form still leaves plenty of room to deviate from the structure, in case important or interesting topics or pieces of information appear not foreseen by the interviewer, and 3) They are often recorded, in order to profit from the degree of detail provided by the length and structure. The 24 in-depth interviews I did were all from one hour to one hour 45 minutes in length, structured by one of three totally different targeted interview guides, and recorded and transcribed in full.

At the fieldwork sites, however, the situation often did not permit longer prepared interviews that used an interview guide. Rather, the situation often called for talks or conversations of various lengths, but still more than merely participating in the conversational flow of the research object. It is hard to draw a definitive line between such conversations and the field interviews. Nevertheless, two characteristics that to me define a field interview from an ordinary conversation are *intention* and some degree of *control*. By that, I mean that I, not the crowd or the discussant, get to decide the main direction and topic of the conversation. It also means that this is intentional, and not the result of a coincidence. Finally, it means that I get to decide, or at least control, who participates in the conversation.

#### 4.3.1 Selection of informants

The selection of informants followed two paths: either they were strategically selected because of their easily identifiable relevance to the project, or they were recruited from the sites that I visited in response to one or several observations, thereby indicating they had important information. In the latter case, new informants often popped up,

introduced by an existing informant because he or she was thought to have interesting information, what is generally known as a snowball effect (Bernard 2012). In the first category, the informants were mostly representatives of the Section for Cultural Affairs in the MFA and leading representatives of different artists or art organizations or institutions from the art sector. The idea behind this selection process was to get hold of actors who had direct contact with- or knowledge of my research field, either because of their formal positions (like being in charge of one of the expert committees allocating travel grants to artists, etc.). In contrast, the second category had much more character of multi-sited ethnography, in the sense that interviews came about as a result of following *people* and *things*. Mostly, the informants of this group were ones who would supplement the strategical sample, for example, artists, journalists, representatives of arts- and cultural businesses (like arts managers, publishers, festival organizers, record company officials, etc.).

#### 4.3.2 Translating interviews

In this project, a majority of the informants were Norwegian speaking. As a result, I interviewed most of the informants in Norwegian. This felt both natural (or rather, to not interview in Norwegian would have felt awkward), and secured that the informants were able to express their meanings and views in their mother tongue. As I could not know in advance about their English-speaking abilities, this minimized the risk of my informants not being able to express themselves freely. A problem that follows from this is the fact that I at some point have to translate the data into English. As discussed elsewhere, it is always a danger that the researcher misinterprets data. This danger increases as the content is adapted into another language, because such a translation both opens and calls for a co-production of the textual data. Nonetheless, this danger of, e.g. adapting data to the benefit of a hypothesis, does not deviate considerably from other data sampling. This means that strategies commonly used to avoid biased interpretations also fully count for this *double* interpretation issue (both on a level of semantics and meaning).

The interview data used in this study counts 24 full interviews and more than 110 shorter field talks. An important question considering methodological reliability and representativeness deals with at what point is the size of the data set sufficient. Because a lack of resources limits most research, it is important to find this point, when the data sampling is adequate with the lowest marginal for yielding a reliable result. According to Bertaux (1981), this point occurs as new data start to increasingly confirm existing information. In other words, when more interviews tend to give little or no additional knowledge. He famously calls this stage the *saturation point* of the data set (ibid.). However, this point is somewhat of a *fata morgana*. Depending on the scope of the project, most researchers will always feel uncertain as to whether they have left important details out. Thus, it is considered an important part of academic professionalism and autonomy to be able to assess when the data sample holds water in terms of size and balance (Fangen 2010).

All of the above methodological problems and challenges have had to do with the dealings with living data sources. In the final sections, I turn to ethnographic text in its most narrow and literate form, document studies.

#### **4.4 Document studies**

In addition to field observations and interviews, a complimentary source of data in the project was different forms of texts, most prominently a body of gray literature (policy documents) and a selection of media texts. Within ethnography, documents may traditionally have had an inferior position to interview and observational data. Prior, for instance, argues that “[i]ssues of meaning and interpretation have been central to social science since the late nineteenth century, though sociologists have been more concerned with the meaning of action rather than the meaning of text” (Prior 2000: 23). Again, with reference to Lamont and Swidler (2014), I would like to bring attention to the ideal of methodological pluralism, avoiding biased dichotomies creating artificial boundaries between rhetoric and practice. Rather, in a discourse perspective, both seem constitutive for discursive practices. Furthermore, working within multi-sited

ethnography, the focus should be on discursive text also in its literal meaning, attending to discursive components such as metaphors, plots, stories or allegories.

The MFA's cultural policy responsibility and practice relate to a comprehensive gray literature, most prominently white papers, budget propositions and internal policy documents, like strategic plans, etc. In this project, the analyses include in particular three white paper reports to the Parliament, the last three budget propositions from the government and one strategy plan. The three white paper reports are:

- Report No. 48 (2002-2003) *Kulturpolitikk fram mot 2014*<sup>29</sup> from the Ministry of Culture;
- Report No. 15 (2008-2009) *Interests, Responsibilities and Opportunities: The main features of Norwegian foreign policy*, and
- Report No. 19 (2012-2013) *Regjeringens internasjonale kulturinnsats*,<sup>30</sup> both from the MFA.

The yearly budget propositions from the government consist of an outline of the allocation of funding to the different purposes of the respective ministries, accompanied by the government's description of the current political situation, needs and conditions, and aims and priorities. In addition to a fiscal budget containing the overall appropriation of national funding, each ministry produces a more detailed proposition. In terms of both allocation of money and the formulation of situational reports, aims, efforts and priorities, as well as reports on former policy work, this specific proposition is a particularly important document. It reflects the government's policy directly, as it follows up rhetoric with action in the present tense. As white papers, they additionally, discursively, produce the legitimate policy of a ministry. Of specific interest to this project is:

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<sup>29</sup> The title roughly translates to Cultural policy towards 2014. The report covered general cultural policy issues.

<sup>30</sup> The title roughly translates to The Government's international cultural effort.

- Prop. 1 S (2013–2014) Proposisjon til Stortinget (Budget proposition, from the former social democratic Stoltenberg II government);
- Endring av Prop. 1 S (2013–2014) Statsbudsjettet 2014 (Revised budget proposition, from the (sitting) conservative Solberg government), and
- Prop. 1 S (2015–2016) Proposisjon til Stortinget (Budget proposition, from the Solberg government).

All three propositions were recommendations from the MFA to the Parliament. Lastly, the document studies included the *Strategi 2017* document, a general outline of the MFA's strategies towards 2017.

In addition to the gray literature, the textual data consisted of a non-systematic collection of media coverage of Norwegian artists abroad, foreign cultural policy, Norwegian soft power and cultural diplomacy, and identity policy. The purpose of this collection was not to provide a representative body of empirical data fully reflecting the mediation of Norwegian foreign cultural policy, but instead was collected with the intention of sampling point of views and perspectives that could illustrate the findings from the remaining ethnography. Mostly, it was collected from the physical and online editions of the four largest Norwegian newspapers, *Aftenposten*, *VG*, *Dagbladet* and *Dagens Næringsliv*.

## 4.5 Ethics

As much as possible, all the fieldwork conducted during this project was done in line with general norms of social scientific research as constituted by The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (NESH). The method design was also reported and approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) (see attachment). The NESH guidelines start by stating, "Research is of great importance – to individuals, to society and to global development. Research also exercises considerable power at all these levels. For both these reasons, it is essential that research is undertaken in ways

that are ethically sound.”<sup>31</sup> Several times in this thesis, I return to just that point, namely the researcher has a great responsibility as s/he enters a variety of social discourses with the authority and status of the expert. As I discuss, it means that s/he has the opportunity to shape that discourse. It also gives power to affect individual’s lives. Not least, does this count for the informants who are thrown into the academic text?

However, several measures can be done to reduce the risk that the informants who are directly made part of the research are exposed in unfortunate ways. A firm principle of research ethics is to primarily make sure that the informant or the research subjects are well-informed of their participation in the project (voluntary informed consent). In this project, everybody taking part was notified in advance, in order to know who I was and what I was doing. At all research sites, a letter of notification was sent out in advance, in order to give information about the project, their individual rights in relation to participation (e.g. that they could deny participation in participant observation studies), and how data were going to be used. Moreover, all interviewees were asked in advance, in writing, and all interviews were done only after an oral acceptance was received from the informant. All information about the project and the use of data was, like the method design in itself, approved by the NSD.

Even though my intention was to keep my informants notified and aware of my research at all times, the participant observation method in itself challenges such general intentions. As I followed informants around, the circumstances sometimes left no room for informing all the involved about my engagement, either because it would have been awkward (taking the focus away from the work that was done by the people I observed) or because the situation gave no opportunity (like in a crowded bar in Manhattan). As Fangen (2010) asserts, these experiences are familiar to most ethnographers doing (often complex) fieldwork. Nonetheless, the researcher signs a moral contract with his

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.etikkom.no/en/research-ethical-guidelines/general-guidelines-for-research-ethics/>



or her research object and informants, insofar as to leave them in no worse a position than when they entered the project in (Madden 2010).

In order to further “prevent any use and communication of information that might inflict damage on individuals who are the subjects of research” (NESH), as much as possible of the data obtained in the project was treated with confidentiality. Hence, no informants are referred to by name, gender, position, rank, etc. in the analyses. However, there are several challenges to this pursuit of confidentiality. Small institutions or organizations, like the architectural division of the Norwegian National Museum or the Norwegian Embassy in London, may provide little shelter for confidentiality. On the one hand, it is of analytical interest to place the informant in a local context; on the other hand, by doing this there is a risk of revealing who the informant is, i.e. a breach of the confidentiality principle. In this project, all informants are anonymous, and in cases of doubt, confidentiality was considered more important than analytical weight. This means that a museum director whose position could be of analytical interest would still only be titled as an art field representative, or an art field representative holding a leading position (depending on the context otherwise), in an attempt to reach a common denominator of secrecy and analytical revenue. Another, more indirect, profit from promising confidentiality of course is that the informants felt freer to comment on my questions.

## 4.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, displaying and discussing the methodological aspects of the thesis within the framework of Multi-Sited Ethnography, it is claimed that such an approach carefully adopts discourse studies’ focus on language (as expressions of authoritative discursive claims), subject positions and sites (objects), thereby making it particularly well-suited for this study. Furthermore, attention is directed to how it aims to follow and analyze *people, things* and *narratives* in their multiple and versatile placings within international cultural relations. People, in terms of positions and roles such as diplomats, artists, cultural workers and bureaucrats, things in terms of works of art, but also prominent

schemes, projects and institutions, and finally, narratives, for example in terms of national identity like Norwegianness are all mental images of what it means to be Norwegian. This approach, it is argued, covers the corresponding heterogeneous character of the MFA, as well as that of the contemporary art world. The study's empirical material consists of qualitative data from participating observation, qualitative interviews and document studies, covering the MFA's cultural policy operations during the project period (2013-2016). The participating observation took place at six cultural events supported by the MFA and three correlated Foreign Service missions during six non-consecutive fieldwork periods throughout 2014.

#### **4.7 Towards analyses**

Having presented the theoretical and methodical approaches to the empirical object of foreign cultural policy, the focus now shifts to the actual empirical analysis. By now, a brief repetition of the structure can perhaps be helpful. The analysis is organized into five chapters, each holding individual thematic focal points relating to key aspects of foreign cultural policy, and not least, each responding to the main research questions stated in the introduction (cf. Chapter 1.2). In sum, they represent my response to the overarching question that guides this study, insofar as taking the Norwegian MFA, its current operations and its main cooperation with key art world partners as the main point of departure: *How is culture and cultural policy conceived (interpreted), legitimated and operationalized?*

Consequently, the first of the five responds to the question of how culture is conceived within foreign policy, more specifically, in the MFA. It deals with how culture and art are understood and rephrased in terms of organizational measures, plans, texts, strategies and aims.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 all relate to questions of how culture and art are legitimized as parts of foreign policy. As is the case throughout the thesis, the ambition is to be able to say something relevant about foreign cultural policy (and legitimacy) in general, albeit taking

the Norwegian case of the MFA as the specific point of departure. Chapter 6 deals with the view that art is an aim in itself sufficient for legitimizing a place in foreign policy and diplomacy operations. On the other hand, Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the instrumental reasons for making culture and art part of such work. In the first of the two, culture's alleged representational function, and how it is seen as capable of producing both national identity and favorable narratives of Norway and Norwegianness, is subjected to analysis. Next, that focus turns to culture and art's commercial potential as sources of economic profit in broad and narrow forms.

In the final analysis chapter, Chapter 9, the focus is directed towards the final of the research questions stated above, namely how culture is operationalized within foreign policy and diplomacy. Again, starting from the MFA and the Norwegian Foreign Service, particularly focusing on the operations of the three (culture-wise) largest Foreign Service missions, this chapter is devoted to how foreign cultural policy is practiced. Where the former analysis chapters were mostly engaged in the policies per se, the attention will now be on policy implementation and action.

## **5. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' cultural policy**

As asserted above, the question in focus in this chapter is how culture and cultural policy are conceived and/or interpreted within Norwegian foreign policy. In fact, this first analysis chapter has a dual ambition. First, it aims to do as indicated above, to analyze what conceptions about culture and cultural policy are found within the Norwegian foreign policy discourse, and in particular within the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The focus is therefore on how a Norwegian foreign cultural policy is produced, and how different foreign policy conceptions of culture and art contribute to- and influence such a production. How do different foreign policy agents relate to culture and cultural policy? Is it something that is seen as important? What rationality or rationalities underlie the ministry's cultural policy thinking, and how does this materialize in actual policy?

The second aim is to outline in more detail the organizational structures of the MFA, in terms of their cultural policy obligations. This involves questions on organizational design, what aims, strategies and policy instruments are central to its operations and, finally, how it concretely involves and integrates with the field it governs. This makes this chapter slightly more descriptive than the others. Also empirically, the analyses in this chapter depart slightly from the ones it precedes, as it to a larger degree (but not entirely) rests on textual data, more specifically a body of foreign policy gray literature, white paper reports, budget propositions, internal strategy papers, web page texts, etc. One reason is gray literature's official character, displaying agreed upon samples of how culture is conceived within foreign policy discourse. Policy documents and strategic plans consequently constitute planned policy outputs and considerations, making them reliable sources of how a specific concept like culture is embodied into a policy field. In discourse terms, these texts hence constitute highly authoritative signifiers, meant to at the same time reflect and produce the policy in question (cf. Milliken 1999, Storey 2009). The same is the case for schemes and organizational networks. They resemble physical and conceptual manifestations of the rationality currently dominating the discourse,

and how they are designed and operated thus represents a viable expression of how the discourse is productive.

It should be noted that the empirical strategy described above does not imply that how foreign cultural policy is presented in policy documents is strictly how culture and cultural policy are implemented in practice. Some cultural policy researchers (see e.g. Mangset 1997) make a rather distinct point about how practice does *not* necessarily represent a coherent counterpart to a desired policy. Value-based conflicts in social fields tend, for example, to be reflected in the bureaucracy that is set to administer them. Also, internal organizational or bureaucratic dynamics to a large degree exert an influence on policy outcome, in line with the findings of, e.g. DiMaggio and Powell (1991). Starting from this, let us jump to the organizational model of the Norwegian foreign cultural policy.

## 5.1 MFA: The organization

What does the MFA organization look like, and how is cultural work organized? Arguably, the heart of the MFA's foreign cultural operations is located within the Section for Cultural Affairs, which in turn is placed within the Department for Culture, Public Diplomacy and Protocol (see Table 3). Some would perhaps claim that the real heart of any foreign affairs lies in the many Foreign Service missions, and hence in diplomacy. Still, when it comes to administrative functions, what is often referred to as the home office, geographically located in Oslo, is the obvious center.

In 2015, 11 advisors work at this section. Each is responsible for one or more branches or sub-fields within the arts field; one advisor has music as a main responsibility, another literature, a third performing arts, etc. The advisors' responsibility covers a number of tasks and duties. First, and perhaps most importantly, they are supposed to stay in close touch with the art field of which they are in charge, making and maintaining contact with central players of the field, staying informed about the latest artistic and institutional innovations and developments, see (and hear) art and artists, etc.

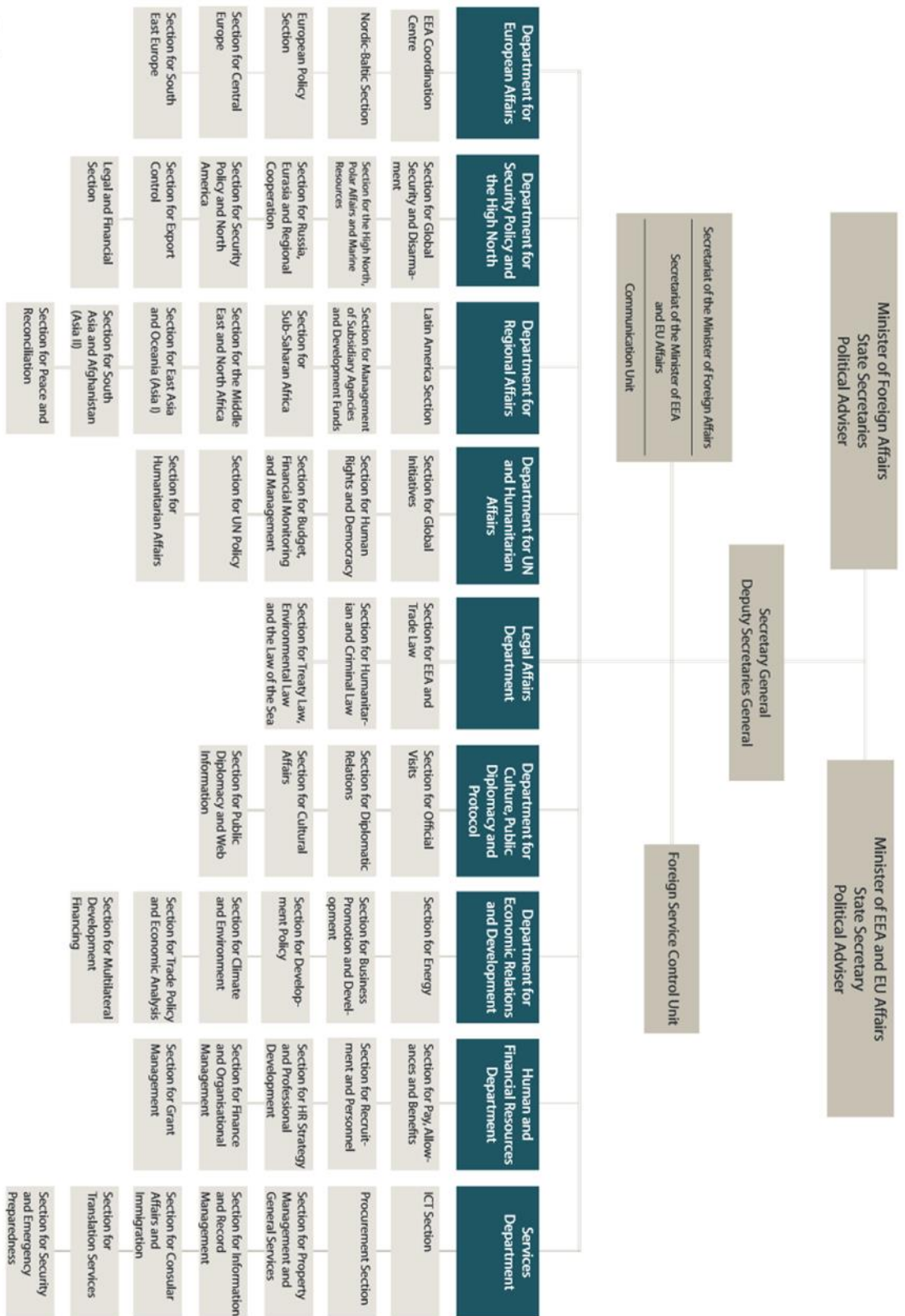


Table 3: Organization Chart for Ministry of Foreign Affairs; retrieved May 2015.

As many of the most relevant events of this sort take place on weekends or after regular office hours, this job tends to also invade the lives of the advisers outside of office hours, and in order to succeed in the job a genuine interest appears to be essential. I will return to further analysis on this in the section on entrepreneurial behavior in cultural diplomacy.

Within office hours, duties include running contact with relevant art organizations and institutions, and to the administration of the grants offered by the ministry. Furthermore, the advisors are involved in the production of policy papers and other bureaucratic duties of a more general character. An important part of this work is staying in touch with the Foreign Service missions in matters of foreign and cultural policy. This involves the allocation of grants assigned to cultural work to the missions, and being mediators between domestic actors, foreign missions and external foreign partners. This work is particularly important as expert visits by foreign art experts, cultural workers and media take place, as the need for co-ordination is evident and crucial to the success rate of such visits.

#### 5.1.1 The Foreign Service, its diplomats, local employees and interns

In most aspects, the organizing of cultural work at the MFA's many Foreign Service missions resembles that of their home office in Oslo. Starting with the general picture, the staff working with arts and culture at Norwegian Foreign Service missions primarily consists of diplomats, local employees and/or trainees.<sup>32</sup> All missions have diplomats that in some form- and to some extent work with cultural affairs. However, their work tasks and the time and resources spent on this heavily depend on the size and location of the mission. In general, the more important a country or region is to Norwegian interests, the more resources and staff it contains. For this reason, missions placed in

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<sup>32</sup> Consequently, this is an area where the Foreign Service missions do actually not resemble the practice of the home office in Oslo. There, all section members are career diplomats.

countries and regions held to be especially important to Norwegian art and cultural interests will have more resources and staff to work for those interests.

In Table 4 below, this is illustrated by the 2015 budget allocations to cultural work at the highest prioritized Foreign Service missions in Norwegian kroner (NOK).

Foreign mission	Funding 2015, NOK	Foreign mission	Funding 2015, NOK
New York	2 750 000	Madrid	400 000
Beijing	2 650 000	Ankara	350 000
London	2 500 000	Haag	300 000
Berlin	2 400 000	Seoul	250 000
Paris	2 200 000	Brasilia	200 000
Washington	1 300 000	UN-delegation NY	150 000
Copenhagen	750 000	Reykjavik	150 000
Moskva	750 000	Rio de Janeiro	150 000
Stockholm	750 000	Vilnius	150 000
Tokyo	650 000	Houston	100 000
Rome	600 000	Murmansk	100 000
Ottawa	550 000	Riga	100 000
Guangzhou	500 000	San Francisco	100 000
New Delhi	500 000	St. Petersburg	100 000
Shanghai	500 000	Tallinn	100 000
Tel Aviv	500 000	Warszawa	50 000
Helsingfors	400 000		

Table 4: Central budget allocations to cultural project work at the highest prioritized Foreign Service missions (2015), in Norwegian kroner (NOK)

Somewhat more specifically, this means that smaller missions rarely have staff dedicated to working with cultural affairs; there, such tasks are placed within the agenda of generalist diplomats or locally employed staff. Medium-size missions, moreover, will in some cases have staff working more or less full time with cultural affairs, while the missions with the highest priority – art-and culture-wise – may even have entire sections dedicated to such affairs, with several staff members with art and culture on their agendas. A couple of things should be noted: First, in most missions to my experience, the ambassadors (or consuls) hold culture and the arts to be given components of their personal fields of responsibility, thereby following up on these issues personally and regardless of staff and resources otherwise. Also, there has been an interesting development over the past years, in which mission staff dedicated to cultural work has shifted from mostly being formally trained diplomats titled *cultural attachés*, to mostly being locally employed, non-diplomatic staff.



Because diplomats are indeed generalists, a dedicated interest in arts and culture (or even press and media) is no precondition for working with cultural affairs, although he or she often has that interest. Some even have a degree in arts, but you will also find the opposite, i.e. diplomats who are set to work with cultural affairs who are not particularly interested in it, apart from their professional call of duty. It is important to remember that in Norwegian diplomacy, with a few exceptions, career diplomats are appointed to their positions. Ideally, they have to be equally able to work with any of the MFA's interest areas; promoting Norwegian art, or seafood for that matter, has to be performed as elegantly and efficiently as picking up and reporting home on local reactions to Norwegian stands in foreign policies and international crises. Additionally, as the MFA's advisory organizations in cases of professional art matters<sup>33</sup> today are much more active partners, the cultural attachés' job has turned from *making* such decisions into *administering* the ones already made. This turn would arguably have made it (even) easier for generalist diplomats to work with cultural affairs, whereas such positions before were held by art connoisseurs within the diplomatic corps.

It should be noted that working long term with cultural affairs, i.e. more than one or at the most two appointments, is generally not regarded a diplomatic career move. At least up until now, aiming for a leading position within the MFA system has not favored dedication to cultural affairs, or as one informant from the corps told me "getting stuck as a cultural attaché." One of many paradoxes of cultural affairs as part of foreign policy rests in how arts and culture on the one hand have a relatively low status, or at least are regarded as a soft policy component compared to the (no-nonsense) realpolitik of trade or security issues, while on the other hand stay vital as an original, immanent part of diplomacy itself. As a policy area, in general terms (apart from a few places like New York and Paris) it seems forever doomed to a place in the valley of shadows. As a policy instrument, however, and not only an instrument, but as a part of a diplomatic, and

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Chapter 5.3.1

hence foreign policy soul, it holds an almost mythical position of having healing inter-human capacities. Arndt (2005) asserts that the view that cultural matters were an important part of general diplomacy was a central part of diplomatic thinking from the start. This is in the sense that it had certain capabilities in order to reduce friction in tough talks between nations of different political or ideological positions (Neumann 2011), and in order to reflect peculiar national qualities within an international environment (Angell and Mordhorst 2014). Not to agree upon a fact that culture has this role seems to have been outside of the diplomatic discourse, a fact that has had a considerable impact on the role culture was assigned within foreign policy; most MFA employees have related to it with some respect, or at least indulgence.

In a historical context, and certainly up until the point where the MFA decentralized the power to make art and artist selections to seven advisory organizations from the art field (cf. Chapter 5.3.1), the diplomats working with cultural affairs were often the art lovers of the corps. According to Mangset (1997), some of them took place to a degree where it turned into some type of professional hobby or even lifestyle within the diplomatic context. However, this commitment would not always entirely be appreciated. To a domestic art discourse, autonomous diplomats with their own cultural agenda would partly be regarded as problematic, as personal interests and taste potentially did not correlate with what was generally considered good quality. On the contrary, diplomatic art was accused of consisting of national romantic or easy-going expressions, drained of meaning within a Norwegian domestic art discourse (ibid.). Hence, according to Mangset, diplomatic art during the 1980s and 90s turned into somewhat of a stigma, following art and artists who were repeatedly called upon to perform within a MFA context. Of course, this did not only have to do with diplomats hiring or exhibiting their favorite artists or art at the missions, it also points at a more complex problem in which the entire ministry was accused of having artistic preferences that did not pay attention to professional advice. Of course, such an accusation represented a more general claim or worry that the ministry was paying more attention to instrumental uses of the arts than complying with the needs of the arts themselves. Today, there are several signs of

cultural affairs evoking a new interest and status among young recruits of the diplomatic corps (this will be further discussed in Chapter 9). For example, the annual workshops where the MFA invites different art organizations to inform about how they work internationally are reported to be packed with young diplomatic corps candidates.

A Foreign Service staff category that for several reasons should be watched with particular interest is that of *local employees*. Locally employed staff members generally include all Foreign Service mission personnel who are not career diplomats be appointed to positions. Their functions range from being drivers and receptionists, via mercantile or system management functions, to advisory or executive functions. There does not seem to be any universal rule or system to the number of the local staff or what work tasks they do at the different missions; however, it obviously correlates to some extent with their size and relative importance. At some missions, usually smaller ones, local staff mostly work with support services. At others, they do executive or administrative work tasks supplementing, however always placed under, the diplomatic corps.

In general, local staff who work as advisory or executive officers within cultural affairs come in two categories: staff members who are locals in a direct sense, which means they are from the country that hosts the mission, or staff who are employed on local terms, but who are (mostly) Norwegian. The first category consists of people with a special interest in Norwegian culture, an interest typically evoked by studying Norwegian language or culture (whether in or outside of Norway) or finding a Norwegian partner. The second category consists of Norwegians more or less permanently staying in the country of the mission, typically due to the same reasons as the former group: studies, job or love. Some needed to finance their studies and started to work at the foreign mission, maybe working their way up, some had other work in the country and changed to a vacant embassy job, whereas some got married or got a boyfriend or girlfriend in the particular country, more or less accidentally getting in touch with a vacant foreign mission job. An additional large part applied for the position, typically being a very attractive job (e.g. being part of the local staff at the Consulate General in New York).

Local staff members of both categories are interesting employees to the MFA. In most cases, they either have an expert background or competence, a valuable knowledge about a local context, or both. A primary aim of diplomacy is to obtain knowledge about such a local context, an aim that is (arguably) a (necessary) professional talent held by a large number of the diplomatic corps. The same thing applies to specific expertise, as diplomats are simply relied on to pick it up as they go. However, local staff with emic knowledge about local culture, or an extensive overview of the Norwegian arts discourse, could potentially mean being a huge asset to the general success of the foreign mission.

The last group involved in cultural affairs at Foreign Service missions is one of people holding different forms of internships. There are mainly two types, the ones that come from universities (e.g. the University of Oslo) on six-month internships, and the ones that apply for (and are granted) six-month trainee stays. Their work tasks, and the degree of responsibility they are given, vary from mission to mission. Still, because the general idea is that they over the course of their six-month stay are supposed to become familiar with as many of the daily routines and doings of the mission as possible, trainees as a general rule are tasked with a little bit of everything. Even if trainees inevitably have to do tedious routine work, they also surprisingly often actively participate actively in work of importance and status. Trainees are mostly young, often in their early 20s, and typically internationally orientated. This means they either have, or are in the course of having, a degree that prepares them for an international career, or come from a family tradition of diplomacy or other foreign services.

## **5.2 Mandate, aims and strategies**

So, what aims and strategies guide the MFA's foreign cultural operations? As stated above, the MFA holds an undisputed, overarching responsibility for *the presentation of- and information about Norwegian culture abroad*. In the next sections, this responsibility, and what it implies, is further elaborated, particularly focusing on the MFA's aims and strategies, and the means they have at their disposal in reaching their

goals. In this section, the empirical focus rests on the policy documents that have been produced within this field over the past few years. Quite obviously, these documents, with their more or less clear political signals aimed at politicians, bureaucrats, the field of practitioners and the public at large, constitute an important position within the discourse, not least as a reflection of the current dominant rhetoric (cf. Lähdesmäki 2011). However, one should pay attention to Mangset when he reminds that official rhetoric and formulations should not be overly emphasized in critical sociological analyses. (The real) practice within a field, he argues, is also to a large extent a reflection of the latent and non-verbal values and interests that the different categories of agents within the field represent (Mangset 1997).

### 5.2.1 Three policy rationalities

As it is practiced by the MFA, Norwegian foreign cultural policy covers a range of different aims and objectives, each relating to different policy logics and rationalities (Lending 2000). Dissecting the Norwegian foreign cultural policy, more or less three such overarching policy rationalities dominate the field, relating to three respective social discourses: cultural, foreign and trade and industry policy.<sup>34</sup> Here, the cultural policy rationality deeply connects to an art and cultural policy discourse, the foreign policy rationality relates to a foreign policy and International Relations discourse, and finally, the trade and industry rationality relates to both an overarching economic and industrial discourse, but also a more specific creative industry discourse.

White paper report no. 19 from 2013 states:

A large part of the international work in the cultural sector is initiated by artists and other agents without public funding or otherwise facilitated by the authorities. Others rely on public support in order to participate on the international stage. When there is a need for public facilitation, this is

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<sup>34</sup> In Lending's typology, what I refer to as trade and industry policy aims are included in foreign policy objectives. Lending also operates with a third set of objectives: development policy objectives, which cover uses of arts and culture as a means of international development aid.

justified in terms of cultural policy, foreign or development policy, or industrial policy. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013: 12)<sup>35</sup>

Aims, reflecting the arts' intrinsic values, artists' and arts institutions' interests both at home and abroad, but also to produce and maintain a general conception of Norway as a culture nation with a thriving and interesting cultural sector and life, all typically represent a cultural policy thinking. Producing a firm image of Norway as a developed, stable and trustworthy nation, contributing to solving diplomatic situations and maintaining well-functioning international relations, all are objectives that come from a foreign policy thinking. Lastly, aims intended to secure art export revenues and promote Norway as an attractive country for tourism and international business (e.g. as a country relevant for foreign investments) are easily recognizable as results of trade and industry logics. The three policy rationalities are not something exclusively found in Norway. In their comparative analysis of international cultural relations within nine different countries, Wyszomirski, Burgess et al. (2003) extensively find the same three, although titled and organized somewhat differently. They write, "Most of the sample countries share a desire to tell their own stories or to project their image and values abroad. [...] Priorities may be diplomatic, economic and/or cultural" (ibid.: 9, 10).

As touched upon several times, these different issues and rationalities, and their inherent interests and aims, are at the same time both intersecting and full of contradictions and subsequent tensions (Mangset 1997, Lending 2000, Arndt 2005, Nilsen 2011, Minnaert 2012, Pamment 2012). Despite this problematic and conflicted relationship, foreign and cultural policies have had a continuous and dominant position within Norwegian foreign policies (Lending 2000). However, particularly from the 2013 White paper report no. 19 and on, the economic values from international cultural activities were recognized fully and implemented as an integrated part of the MFA's

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<sup>35</sup> As previously stated, all quotes from White paper no. 19, 2013, are translated from Norwegian to English by the author of the thesis.

work, though without seeing a formalized cooperation between the MFA or the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Consequently, all three rationalities are easily observable in both governmental policy documents and reports, as well as other channels for communication of the MFA's work. For example, at the MFA's (English) homepage, where the government's *International cultural engagement* is described as follows: <sup>36</sup> "The primary objective of the Government's efforts to promote Norwegian culture internationally is to help Norwegian artists to gain access to key arenas abroad and thus reach a wider audience." As argued above, it is no coincidence that a clearly stated cultural policy aim initiates the aim's outline. Following next, under the heading *Modern diplomacy*, however, objectives that are more instrumental follow:

Promoting Norwegian culture helps to advance Norwegian interests abroad, and is a key component of modern public diplomacy.

Bringing Norwegian arts and culture to an international audience also increases interest in and awareness of Norway as a knowledge-based society with a vibrant cultural sector. Cultural activities offer opportunities for creating meeting places, building networks and strengthening dialogue with important target groups. Our efforts to promote Norwegian culture internationally are part of our long-term strategic efforts to build a good reputation for Norway, with particular emphasis on quality and innovation.

Moreover, under the heading *Cultural industries*, the web page states:

The Government attaches particular importance to helping Norwegian cultural industries to gain access to the international market. In recent years, there has been substantial growth in exports of Norwegian culture to other Nordic countries, to a number of European countries, to North America and Asia, and to some of the rapidly growing economies.

Within relevant primary policy documents, central aims and strategies guiding the MFA's cultural policy work is particularly found within three sources: the annual budget proposition, presently the proposition for the fiscal year 2016, in white paper reports,

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/foreign-affairs/int-cultural-engagement/kultur/cultural-engagement/id2459963/> Retrieved 20.08.2016.

most prominently no. 19 from 2013, and within ministerial strategy documents, currently “Strategy 2017.”

In Chapter 115 of the 2016 MFA Budget proposition, under the heading *Business promotional, cultural and informational purposes*,<sup>37</sup> both the purpose of- and aims for Norwegian foreign cultural affairs are stated:

The aim of this initiative is to strengthen Norwegian cultural life’s international opportunities, contribute to an active and vibrant Norwegian culture life and contribute to that the Norwegian culture is part of the global trends within its respective cultural fields. International cultural cooperation creates meeting places, build networks and strengthen dialogue with the diversity of international trends and players that are important target groups for Norwegian interests.

White paper report no. 19 from 2013 describes the main purpose with the government’s foreign cultural policy effort as being able:

... to secure that Norwegian artists and cultural workers get international possibilities, to contribute to an active and vibrant Norwegian cultural life, and that Norwegian culture is part of the global cultural conversation, i.e. the development that takes place in the meeting between artists and cultural expressions across national borders. (2013: 5)

It is stressed that reciprocity, i.e. a two-way communication, is an important principle of this cultural conversation. Furthermore, under the heading *Culture as part of foreign policy*, it is stated that the aim is:

... to facilitate the internationalization of the Norwegian arts and cultural sector, and to contribute to knowledge about and interest in Norway as a culture and knowledge nation. Cultural cooperation of good quality sustains a good reputation for Norway and supports its connections with important partner countries. (ibid.: 13)

Lastly, in the MFA’s internal strategic plan document, Strategy 2017, Norwegian foreign cultural policy and the purpose of this policy is described in the following way: “The Foreign Service ensures Norwegian foreign policy interests by [...] promoting political and economic interests, Norwegian culture, and Norway’s reputation towards other nations and international organizations.”

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<sup>37</sup> All quotes from the 2016 MFA Budget proposition are translated from Norwegian to English by the author of the thesis.



One should observe that these different sources, and consequently their content, hold a different status. Where a budget proposition states policy signals for the following fiscal year, white paper reports and more comprehensive strategy documents aim to state policies for a longer period of time. This has both empirical and analytical implications. The most explicit reflection of present policy within a field is found in the proposition. However, the information here is often general, packed and conclusive (exclamatory, rather than polemic). Descriptions and arguments, details and “the long lines” of the policy that are more comprehensive are therefore rather found in white paper reports and comprehensive strategy papers. Where *the Prop.*, as the annual budget proposition is fondly denoted by many of the informants of the MFA, deals with foreign cultural policy over at the most one or two pages (the 2016 Budget proposition text on foreign cultural affairs reads 233 words), White paper report no. 19 from 2003 is devoted to the subject over 68 full pages. The report was produced by the social-democratic Stoltenberg government, as a cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (including the Ministry of Foreign Aid) and Culture, and was according to a press release,<sup>38</sup> “the first overarching account of the government's international cultural efforts.” Even if this is perhaps not entirely correct (White paper report no. 13 (1987-1988), *About Norway's official international cultural cooperation*, at least the time of its release, held a similar status. This report is even mentioned in White paper report no. 19), it represented a major achievement for the field, something that was pointed out specifically in several interviews with central MFA officials. Both because it described in detail the cultural component of the Norwegian foreign policy, but also because a report to the Parliament in itself represented an articulation of a policy field. In terms of discourses analysis, it did not merely draw attention to what might be done politically, it also produced the field and settled what was at stake (Bacchi 2000).

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<sup>38</sup> [https://www.regjeringen.no/nb/aktuelt/pm\\_kultur/id717825/](https://www.regjeringen.no/nb/aktuelt/pm_kultur/id717825/) Retrieved 20.08.2016

On the other hand, the problem with white paper reports is that they do not always represent the current policies within the field. Since they often represent governments that have resigned, they have to be treated as historic documents. Still, and I think this is analytically interesting, white paper reports, particularly the ones covering small policy fields, tend to remain relevant beyond and somewhat detached from the governments that initiated them. Significant political differences will obviously increase the probability of old reports being seen as outdated and in need of revision. However, in Norway, cultural policy is relatively undisputed, in the sense that policies have been subject to a relative consensus over party borders (Røyseng 2004), including foreign policy too (Lodgaard 2002, Riste 2004). This tendency to consensus is illustrated by the fact that when White paper report no. 19 from 2012-2013 was treated by the Parliament, it was passed with few notices or revisions from the opposition at the time (which were to become what is the position today, including many of the central politicians involved) (Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense 2013).

The continuous consensus within cultural and foreign policy has resulted in a tendency in which general policies are being reproduced within several consecutive white papers, as the main lines have stayed relatively steady. This has been the case, even if specific modes of implementation (for instance views on what policy instruments or support schemes are most suitable, or what ministry should hold the main responsibility) have changed or developed. In particular, this seems to be the case for the administration and public servants, which constantly look for policy input to their bureaucratic work. Just one example illustrating this point is the number of phrasings that are implemented from the comprehensive white paper report prose into all types of work papers such as cooperation agreements (ministry – art field organizations and institutions), support award letters, internal work plans, strategy documents, etc. Hence, there is a considerable amount of inter-textuality involved in the way this text, and others like it, are thought to be seen and interpreted. Arguably, this is also the reason that the focus should be redirected to how these political signals are interpreted and executed, both within the responsible ministry and in the interplay between the ministry and the field

it is set to administer, in this case the arts. Such a redirection leads to an analysis not so much of the explicit policy of this field, but rather of how foreign cultural policy is discursively produced. This, at least in part, would explain why such discourse is quite resistant to changes, a feature that is often described as typical for bureaucratic organizations like ministries. For example, Tullock argues:

Turning now to the theory of bureaucracy (...) the traditional view was either that bureaucrats followed the orders of their political superiors or alternatively that they simply did what was right. However, in modern societies where civil service legislation makes it all but impossible for the superiors either to dismiss them or even to reduce their salaries, the degree to which the bureaucrats are so compelled is moderate. Bureaucrats normally have several private motives. One is, of course, simply not to work too hard (...). Another is to expand the size of one's own department and in the process of so doing, being willing to go along with the expansion of all the rest. A third is to improve the perks that accompany a particular position. (Tullock 1987: 1041)

Having claimed that policy documents obviously constitute an important and fruitful source for the study of policy change and development, not least the annually produced Budget propositions. In that respect, the most recent transition from the social democrat Stoltenberg to the conservative Solberg in 2013 (with budget effects from the fiscal year 2014) represents an interesting point of study. Reading the 2016 prop., in the introduction where the main priorities of the Norwegian foreign policy are stated, culture or the arts are *not* among them. In fact, culture or the arts are not mentioned at all in the 10-page-long introduction. This assumedly reflects a firm rearticulation of foreign policy priorities in the direction of hard power values. In short, the change within this part of foreign policies implies a transition from an emphasis on the promotion of culture and Norway branding, towards a much greater emphasis on Norwegian international trade and industry interests.

This overarching change in rhetoric is also reflected in the budget allocation to foreign cultural initiatives, reduced by almost 40% from 2012 to 2016.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, where cultural policy rationality previously dominated the policy text under Chapter 115,

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<sup>39</sup> Just as this thesis is about to be submitted (March 2017), the Solberg government has decided to adjust these budget allocations up with almost the exact same 40% that were reduced from 2012-2016 (to 12,8 million kroner). More info on this here: <https://nb-no.facebook.com/norwegianartsabroad/>

international trade and business policies have now taken over the hegemony. As early as in its first Budget proposition from 2014, a revision of the former government's fiscal budget, the Solberg government, changed the name of the chapter from 115 *Promotion of Culture, of Norway, and informational purposes*, to 115 *Promotion of business, of culture, and informational purposes*. The new profile was stressed through the following amendment: "The government will emphasize business promotion and long-term and targeted initiatives for Norwegian cultural life's international possibilities. The work with business promotion will have priority" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Prop. 1 S [Revised version] 2013: 35). This transition is further described in the 2016 prop, as "a change of pace in the efforts to promote Norwegian trade and industry interests internationally" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Prop. 1 S 2016: 74), which is explained in the following terms:

The government's work is based on close contact between Norwegian cultural life, arts organizations, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Service missions. The missions will be active, targeted and relevant partners for cultural life. Long-term and strategic objectives will form the basis for the work. Furthermore, an emphasis should be on culture as industry. A particular priority should be given to countries which constitute the main arenas for the internationalization for Norwegian artists and/or where Norwegian interests are greatest, as well as in countries of particular foreign policy significance. This will apply to the Nordic countries, several countries in Europe, North America and Asia and selected fast-growing economies. (ibid.: 75)

Given this, the Solberg government no doubt represents a more outspoken focus on Norwegian commercial interests, both in general and in terms of art and culture's capacity, both directly and indirectly, to contribute to such interests. The 2016 prop also pertains to the reduced emphasis on traditional promotion (in which culture and the arts have traditionally been imprinted): "In 2014, the government put an emphasis on a clearer international communication of Norwegian political priorities, and less emphasis on general Norway profiling" (ibid.: 75). This turn may therefore also be seen as a step away from, or at least a reduced focus, on the open diplomacy thinking that influenced the 2013 White paper report no. 19, or perhaps even more, the thinking behind the 1988 White paper report no. 13.

### 5.2.2 Central strategies

Norwegian foreign cultural policy is guided by a number of strategies and work forms, most of which are, and have been over time, well-known features of general (Western)

foreign cultural policy operations (cf. Wyszomirski, Burgess et al. 2003). Three strategic focuses or modes appear as particularly central and/or analytically interesting. First, the government's dual aim of cooperation/competition, second, its focus on external demand, and, finally, the idea of making *quality* (but also concentration and continuity) a main strategic feature.

In her analyses of British cultural diplomacy, Melissa Nisbett points out that this activity for the last 10 years has been characterized by “a strategy that centered on the dual aims of ‘cooperation’ on one hand and ‘competition’ on the other” (2016: 121). Here, cooperation describes activity where individual and institutional agents cooperate on equal footing, involving principal and idealistic confidence in notions of reciprocity (however, with the foreign policy overtone to it that even peaceful art cooperation holds the potential for producing instrumental, foreign policy profits, often applied to counteract the effects of hard power). Moreover, competition, being the use of culture to promote national (general or specific) interests in a global competition, seeing nations as fundamentally competing over mutual benefits and profits (ibid.). This observation seems to have more general character than just the British case, as it would also make up a perfect description of Norwegian foreign cultural policies. This dual aim strategy becomes apparent, e.g. in White paper report no. 19 from 2003. Here, the purpose with the government's effort for the Norwegian cultural life internationally is described as both “to secure that Norwegian artists and cultural workers get international possibilities,” and to contribute to “that Norwegian culture can enter into a mutual dialogue with an international cultural life” (2013: 11). Under the heading, *National and international interaction*, this is elaborated, stating that international cultural activity, cooperation and exchange on the one hand:

... helps to make Norwegian cultural life more active and vibrant. The fact that Norwegian artists and cultural actors travel, and that international impulses are brought back, strengthens artistic quality, knowledge, expertise and diversity in the cultural sector. This benefits both the sector itself and the Norwegian audience. (ibid.: 12)

On the other hand, it “opens our culture to other countries and expanding the scope of the audience abroad for Norwegian artists and performers,” something that “also increases the value creation in Norwegian culture exports” (ibid.).

Presently, the Solberg government’s focus on competing (and winning) in international cultural institutions and arenas seems strengthened at the sacrifice of cooperation (cf. the point above with the new government’s focus on commercial values from the arts). An interesting question is in what way has this strategic shift of focus affected the discourse, or whether there is a connection between this governmental dual aim strategy and the tripartite rationality that also characterizes the Norwegian foreign cultural activity. For example, does an ideological preference for cooperation over competition belong to a cultural policy any more than to an economic or foreign policy discourse? Vice versa, has the aim to compete within international arenas and markets always to do with commercial or foreign policy interests, or is it also found within the arts and the cultural policy? These questions will be revisited later in the analyses. For now, interest is directed towards the second strategic feature of the Norwegian foreign cultural practice, the in-demand principle.

Generally, this practice has rested on a dual strategy of engagement, partly based on competition, and partly on cooperation. However, the trend indicated is an increasingly competitive international foreign cultural policy climate (Nisbett 2016). For example, the Canadian researcher Louis Belanger (1999) has asserted that cultural diplomacy has turned instrumentally from predominately being about *the projection of culture to the protection of culture* and cultural rights.

### 5.2.3 The in-demand principle

An undisputed strategic principle of the current Norwegian foreign cultural policy is to support *only* art and artists who can prove an interest or demand from an international institution, arena or audience. According to policy documents, this demand is a key factor for international success. Much of the rationale behind this policy was summed

up in 2008 by the MFA's advisory organization within performing arts, PAHN,<sup>40</sup> when they argued that:

One does not "send out" [art and artists] anymore, but relates to a reality that is demand-driven and network-based, and which simultaneously evolves on a multitude of levels and places. Artist to artist contact, festival to ensemble, festival to festival, institution to institution, project to project, seminar to seminar, production to production, etc. (Berge 2009: 11)

The same tendency is described within the visual art field. In 2011's White paper report no. 23 on visual arts, the Ministry of Culture stated that the very establishing of the Office for Contemporary Art Norway, soon to be the advisory organization to the MFA, was grounded in a change of attitude in the arts policy in the late 1990s. The attitude that Norwegian art was to be perceived as an export product, it claims, was replaced by a desire for exchange and cooperation (Ministry of Culture 2012). As cultural policy aims and objectives were increasingly implemented into the MFA's activity, the decision to strengthen the demand focus – that was obviously always there (Berg 1985) – was made.

In addition to adapting to an internal art world logic, thus denoting an ideological turn away from an export product thinking and other instrumental rationalities, there are also several other causes for a strategic implementation of the in-demand principle. From a commercial creative industry perspective, which was still present – to some (industrialized) parts of the arts more than (arty) others – the principle could be seen as a response to a return on investment-rationality. Because support for the internationalization of art may be seen as an investment in order to produce future export revenues, it makes sense to maintain a focus on promoting products that actually have a market.

An interesting aspect or effect from a demand-based practice is that it reduces the need for domestic experts who select art and artists they believe could be successful or influential abroad. In part, such work is extremely difficult; quality is contextual, and often art and artists who are popular at home do not succeed in the same way abroad,

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<sup>40</sup> Performing Arts Hub Norway, see also Chapter 5.3.1

making the use of external curators a logical response. Also in part, to promote art that is curated by domestic experts, at least mildly, has an appearance or overtone of cultural imperialism. Since the arts and cultural expressions potentially (historically) were signifiers for an assumed cultural superiority, an ardent promotion of something that no one has really asked for could potentially be perceived of as impertinent. In that sense, the transition to a demand-based system for curatorship presumably denotes a post-modern, post-colonial progress.

#### 5.2.4 Quality, concentration, continuity

A third fundamental strategic feature reflected in the governmental policies relates to a specific prioritization of *quality*, *concentration* and *continuity*. This approach is nothing new within the Norwegian practice. According to Mangset, the MFA also stated their strategy in 1997 through what has become known as the *three Ks*:<sup>41</sup> Quality [Kvalitet], Continuity [Kontinuitet] and Concentration [Konsentrasjon]. Here, the Quality principle represented the idea that Norway should present itself with “the best” of its cultural life. Concentration implied that budget allocations should not be spread out thinly or randomly, but instead applied in high-quality arenas in selected countries, territories and regions. Continuity, finally, meant to stay with quality initiative over time, rather than supporting singular events or happenings (Mangset 1997). In his work, Mangset relates this strategy to an elitist (and instrumental) ideology, in which the objective is to establish Norwegian art as a relevant and interesting part of an international art discourse.

In current policy documents, cultural quality appears both explicitly and implicitly. In the 2016 Budget proposition, high quality is not mentioned explicitly, perhaps mainly due to its scarce form. Still, when reading the text, one dimly senses the notion’s taken-for-granted importance. In the general section of White paper report no. 19 from 2013,

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<sup>41</sup> In Norwegian, quality, continuity and concentration are all spelled with a K.



however, it is explicitly presented as a prerequisite or condition in order for international cooperation to succeed (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013). Moreover, in the chapters discussing the different sub-fields within the arts, this is further elaborated. A small bundle of citations may serve as illustration:

There is a clear coherence between a focus on diversity and quality in domestic cultural policies and Norwegian literature's position abroad (ibid.: 28)

Norway should be renowned for literature of high quality in all genres (ibid.: 30)

Public support to international activity must be allocated based on artistic quality (ibid.: 31)

The aim for the field of film is that a diversity of film and television productions, based on Norwegian language, culture and social conditions, recognized for high quality, artistic and innovation, is to challenge and reach a large audience abroad as well as at home (ibid.: 32)

A sufficiently large production of films, focusing on quality and diversity, is an important factor in order to maintain and develop the cultural export of Norwegian films. (ibid.: 33)

The government's cultural policy aim for the music field is to make music of high artistic quality available to as many as possible and to promote artistic development and innovation. [...] a particular aim is to facilitate for and develop a diversity that is recognized for its high quality, characterized by musical breadth, diversity and innovation, and that reaches a large audience in Norway and internationally. (ibid.: 35)

The frequent and rhetorical use of quality and the way it is presented indicates that the notion of quality as a prerequisite for successful international success has a dominant position in the discourse. An interesting observation is that along with quality, in many of these citations *diversity* appears as an important value, consequently also playing a prominent position within the discourse. In contrast, what this quality (or diversity, for that matter) consists of is not stated. The primary reason for this is that it should not be none of the MFA's (or the government's) concern, as the principle of an arm's length distance is an important feature of this policy field:

An important point is to make sure that governmental authorities do not interfere politically in individual cultural agents' professional activities and expressions. Rather, the authorities should facilitate through drawing up principal aims, making overarching priorities, facilitating infrastructure and determining the frames for financial support. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013: 7)

The quality focus comes with a concurrent strategic interest in a *concentration* of- and *continuity* in the effort and resources. More specifically, this means to target what is thought to be particularly important art and artists, partners and markets/audiences, and opposes dispersing resources on a broad spectrum of receivers and destinations. It

also means staying with projects and priorities over time, in order to settle them firmly, as opposed to doing many (a broad spectrum) of small projects or events once or twice. This strategic interest hence favors long-term network establishment and maintenance, often with specific, strategically important institutions and individuals. This strategic approach obviously relates to the in-demand principle, establishing a direct link between foreign interest and domestic priorities. The tendency to concentrate the effort to certain agents or markets on long-term schemes is broadly reflected in policy documents, e.g. in the 2016 prop, which states that:

*Long-term and strategic objectives have to form the basis for the work. Moreover, cultural work with a commercial orientation should be emphasized. Initiatives should particularly target countries that constitute the main international arenas for Norwegian artists and/or where Norwegian interests are greatest, as well as in countries of particular foreign policy significance. This will apply to the Nordic countries, several countries in Europe, North America and Asia and selected fast-growing economies. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2015: 75, author's italic)*

According to policy documents, the purpose of this strategic partnership is to strengthen interest in- and demand for Norwegian culture in international markets, thereby ensuring flexibility to take advantage of opportunities that arise, and to build long-term and stable cooperative relations between Norwegian and international cultural agents, institutions and arenas. Additionally, it is also an evident approval of what Mangset termed the spearhead- or the locomotive strategy, emphasizing (and consequently legitimating) the use of high-profile, high-quality art and artists, hoping they can open doors to international markets and arenas for artists following in their trails (1997). For example, important elements in this work have been to initiate important networks, and to support Norwegian artists and cultural industries at the most relevant international exhibition venues and trade expos. Here, the Foreign Service missions have played an important role. Since it took place in 2014, this activity is described in the 2016 Budget proposition:

The Foreign Service missions' efforts to promote Norwegian culture and creative industry are concentrated on networking between professional Norwegian actors and key international art and cultural institutions. Targeted and long-term cooperation with the curators and selection committee gave Norway a foothold in the world's largest art book fairs, the New York Art Book Fair, which in 2014 became one of the most prestigious exhibition windows for the Norwegian contemporary art scene. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2015: 76)

Finally, the emphasis on targeted and long-term efforts includes the use of a number of specific instruments, most prominently travel support scheme, a media and expert visit program and a close relationship to- and cooperation with the domestic art sector. This cooperation is therefore the subject of the next sections.

### 5.3 Cooperation with the art world

The governmental work is based on close contact between Norwegian cultural life, artistic organizations, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Service missions. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2015: 75 [Budget proposition 1 S])

Even though Norwegian foreign cultural policy for long was characterized by a conflicted relationship between different interests and ideologies (Mangset 1997, Nilsen 2011), over the past years, and particularly since 2003, the MFA and the art sector have had a comprehensive and thriving cooperation. The most formalized part of this partnership, the one between the ministry and the seven advisory organizations from the art field, has in fact proven both stable and productive (with a steady increase in budget allocations up until 2013). It appears as the decentralization of power from the ministry to the art field that took place from 2003, implementing an arm's length distance between the government and professional art assessments, which contributed to calming previous woes over both instrumental uses of the arts and a lack of competence in quality assessments (cf. Mangset 1997). Whether it has, and other questions related to quality assessments, will be further discussed in the next chapter. First, let us take a closer look at how the cooperation between the MFA and the art field is organized and understood.

#### 5.3.1 Advisory organizations

A central part of foreign cultural activity is to decide which art and artists should be included in Norwegian official activity (in the meaning to receive governmental support, e.g. travel grant or support from embassies when abroad). As previously stated, from 2003 the responsibility for those decisions for the most part were decentralized to seven arts *advisory organizations*. Since then, as I have argued and will continue to argue, the

ministry's operations have grown irrevocably intertwined with these organizations in particular, but also the art field more in general. The seven organizations are: the *Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA)*, *NORLA (Norwegian literature abroad)*, *Music Norway*, the *Norwegian Film Institute (NFI)*, *Performing Arts Hub Norway (PAHN)*, *Norwegian Crafts* (who is responsible for arts and crafts), and finally, the *Norwegian Centre for Design and Architecture*.<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that all of them receive governmental funding for their operations from the Ministry of Culture, keeping a number of additional cultural policy aims and objectives within their respective areas of operation. For this reason, they all maintain close ties to a diverse set of ministerial aims and needs, coming from two ministries that have not always had the best of relationships.

According to White paper report no. 19 from 2013, the advisory organizations' responsibility within the MFA's delegated administration model is:

... to develop knowledge about international cooperation in their respective fields, participate in important international arenas and support Norwegian artists' needs for international networks. They are also professional advisors for the MFA and the Foreign Service missions. The organizations and Foreign Service missions cooperate on concrete measures and networking, and cooperate to organize a comprehensive visitor and press program that aims to stimulate interest and demand for Norwegian art and culture internationally. This can be described as a triangle model in which ministries (including the Norwegian Arts Council), Foreign Service missions and organizations work closely together in a strategic partnership. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013)

In addition, they are responsible for the administration of the ministry's travel funding scheme.

A particular focus should be directed towards the important role the organizations are given as expert advisors on international issues within their respective fields, developing valuable competence and networks. This position undoubtedly gives the organization a position to profoundly influence the profile of the entire Norwegian international effort within this field. Hence, the organizations' role is comprehensive, rendering these

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<sup>42</sup> From 2016, the seven organizations are also organized as the organization Norwegian Arts Abroad. For more info, see: <https://www.stikk.no/reisestotte/index.php?lang=en>

selected ones great power within the art field. Consequently, this specific way of organizing the field has of course been subject to debate, both over alternative models or organizations and on how the different organizations prioritize their resources.

At the time of the decentralization, all of them were already established as major players within their genres, and all stood out as if not obvious choices for the important advisory role, at least understandable choices. As a result, they were already working extensively with international activities, some already in close cooperation with the MFA, so in most aspects the transition proceeded smoothly and quietly. In 2003, both OCA and NORLA were already rigged as “export” offices for Norwegian visual arts and literature, while the others were actively working with international art relations with various partners. Therefore, it would be fair to claim that these seven organizations actually did represent the Norwegian art scene, even though they perhaps did not fully represent all specific interests and views, and as noted above, there were debates over their role. Still, compared to the situation prior to 2003, as described in Mangset (1997), it seems clear that at the time of the delegation of responsibility, and still today, there was and is a relative content within the art world on how this field is organized.

Seven individually adjusted cooperation *agreements* guide the cooperation between the MFA and the advisory organizations. Although individually adjusted, the agreements are formed much over the same shape, and they differ marginally in form and content from organization to organization, especially in the initial sections covering overarching and principal issues. Hence, they appear to both reflect and regulate two parties that have both mutual and individual needs and claims; the MFA’s policies are clearly stated, as are specific sub-genre oriented needs and demands.

Typically, the cooperation agreements (*letter of assignments*<sup>43</sup>) are effective for two years, and are typically titled, e.g. as in the case of Music Norway, *Agreement of*

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<sup>43</sup> In Norwegian: *Oppdragsbrev*. In the case of OCA, *Letter of allocation* [*tildelingsbrev*].

*cooperation 2015-2017: The delegation of the administration of grants within the field of music to Music Norway. Advisory services to the MFA within the field of music.*<sup>44</sup> The agreements are all initiated with the same explicit statement of the main purpose of the cooperation:

The overarching objective is to contribute to professional Norwegian artists and cultural workers receiving international opportunities, an active and vibrant Norwegian cultural life, and that Norwegian culture can participate in a mutual dialogue with an international culture life. The travel support program contributes to that Norwegian cultural workers who are engaged in international work are capable of accomplishing this engagement. It is assumed that the presentation of Norwegian arts and culture of high artistic quality abroad contributes to sustaining the image of Norway as an interesting and innovative culture nation, and to sustain a positive image of Norway internationally. (Cooperation agreement between the MFA and the seven advisory organizations)

They then continue with a general and specific text about the administrative aspects of the cooperation, some of it specific to the respective art field that the organization represents.

Three aspects of these agreements are of particular interest. First, the fact that the text about the overarching purpose of the cooperation is actually the same as that found in policy documents relevant to this field. This point, however trivial though it may be, illustrates the point asserted above on how a dominant rationality within the discourse is maintained through inter-textuality. This, arguably, leaves room for negotiations or play of practice in order to operate and implement governmental policies. Thus, as long as no new policy strategy is explicitly produced, and as long as the existing practice does not deviate substantially from current budget propositions, these discursive elements tend to hold on to their status as steering instruments for the policy field, in this case the MFA. Moreover, it suggests that the main aims of the foreign cultural policy continues somewhat unchanged under the current government, independently of the fact that it has cut the funding to foreign cultural affairs substantially, and generally toned down its voice in cases of culture and cultural diplomacy (in favor of more

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<sup>44</sup> In Norwegian: *Samarbeidsavtale 2015-2017. Delegering av tilskuddsforvaltning for reisestøtte for musikk til Music Norway. Rådgivingstjester for UD innen musikk.*

traditional foreign policies, consisting of hard power/realpolitik). It therefore sends a signal to this field that the main lines of Norwegian policies remain unchanged.

The second aspect that is interesting is the quite explicit formulation on instrumental value from the cooperation. Prominently placed first in the agreement, the advisory organizations are never to doubt that one of the overarching aims of this operation is to promote general Norwegian interests. It is not to be missed. If it is so, as some have claimed, that the art field is allergic to instrumentalism, this agreement must be hard to swallow for some. An alternative analysis is that they take a much more pragmatic stance, seeing general Norwegian interests as a perfectly legitimate purpose of Norwegian foreign cultural policies, at least as long as it does not explicitly pertain to interests that the arts traditionally have opposed, such as, for example, military operations (cf. Nissen 2012)

A final interesting aspect is the explicit absence of aims related to commercial effects. As argued above, commercial motifs and ambitions are, in my view, so clearly stated in both recent rhetoric and practice, that it makes sense to state a commercial, economic rationale for one of three principal rationales of foreign cultural policy. Particularly in light of the clear signals from the new government (“The work with business promotion will have priority”), and particularly since this policy also includes art that assumes an industrial form (music, literature, film, etc.), this is somewhat peculiar. It could of course be argued that trade policy and commercial objectives are implicitly part of the aim to make Norway an *innovative culture nation*, or that economic conditions are a self-evident part of the *internationalization of the arts*. In fact, in the agreement between the MFA and Music Norway, the sentence, “The support scheme also covers export and trade-oriented measures: artists, composers and songwriters, managements and the music industry,” suggests that the scheme in some way or to some degree touches on a trade or export discourse. However, it is still implicit. This fact suggests a somewhat ambiguous relationship between an economic (export) discourse and the foreign cultural discourse. In White paper report no. 19 from 2013, export and purely commercial goals are discussed:

Culture can be industry and contribute to export and value creation abroad. The term export can be understood in different ways. When an artist receives fees or other remuneration to display or perform artwork abroad, it is export in a broad sense. However, many international cultural activities are remunerated or compensated in other ways: they are not primarily taking place within commercial frames, with limited commercial potential, holding mainly cultural aims. In this report, export is used in a narrow sense. It is understood as the sale of cultural goods and services where the cultural business or individuals' international initiatives explicitly hold commercial profit as a main goal, and where the earning potential is believed to be of a certain level. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013: 7)

Still, it does not render any clear signals about what to include in the Norwegian foreign cultural policy practice. As stated earlier, this has been adjusted by the later government, however without at the same time including it in the cooperation agreement with the advisory organizations. As I will return to in later sections, in practice, commercial objectives are an extremely important part of the foreign cultural activity, and played out by agents within both the arts and the government. Thus, the discrepancy between policy papers and practice inevitably raises questions on what status commercial interests really have within the discourse, and how this status is negotiated by the different interests and stakeholders.

### 5.3.2 Main institutions

In addition to the advisory organizations, the MFA cooperates more loosely with a number of other organizations and institutions within the art field. One objective with this of course is to broaden the ministry's interface with the bureaucrats, thereby reducing tensions over the use of just a few organizations charged with representing an entire field. Another is simply receiving more input and to initiate external projects to travel grants and expert and media visits. The cooperation spans from governmental institutions like the Arts Council Norway and the Directorate for Cultural Heritage to national and regional art institutions, organizations and venues. One example is the ministry's cooperation with the Norwegian National Museum in relation to the Norwegian contribution to the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale. This project did therefore not take place in cooperation with the otherwise formal ministerial partner in cases of architecture, the Norwegian Centre for Design and Architecture. The following year, when Norway was represented with a prominent project at the Nordic pavilion in the Venice Art Biennale, the project was also carried out in cooperation with OCA,



something which illustrates that project cooperation is more the result of pragmatic than corporate considerations (cf. Mangset 1997).

## 5.4 MFA's policy instruments

The MFA seeks to mainly accomplish their cultural policy aims and objectives through two foreign cultural policy instruments: a *travel support scheme* for Norwegian artists showcasing or performing abroad, and an international *expert and media visit scheme*. In policy papers, the *Foreign Service* with its missions and diplomacy is explicitly mentioned as a third instrument, as they are seen as an operational branch, securing Norwegian art's and artists' interests as an extension of all of the above-mentioned instruments. For example, in the 2016 Budget proposition, it is stated that, "[t]he Foreign Service missions are to be active, targeted and relevant partners for cultural life" (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2015: 75). This service no doubt constitutes an important part of Norway's foreign cultural policy work, as in most domains it is the agent who operationalizes the policy in practice. In order to secure this agency with regard to professionalism in art questions, the many services maintain a close dialogue with the seven advisory organizations in the art field.

In addition, a fourth policy instrument should also be added: the ministry's *ad hoc*-based project cooperation and funding. Compared to the travel support and media and expert visit schemes, this instrument is much less comprehensive. Nevertheless, it is still considered important, as it gives the ministry and the respective advisory organization, which is always consulted in such cases, a welcome possibility to enter into opportunities that come unexpectedly, or existing projects that turn out to be more important than first expected. A good example is Norway's two consecutive Nordic pavilion exhibitions at the 2014 and 2015 Venice Architecture and Art Biennales, which were opportunities to showcase Norwegian art and artists at possibly *the* most important architecture and art site today. These opportunities, which are typical for just ad hoc projects, were thus the result of decisions made outside of the MFA's power, and thus difficult to predict and incorporate into ordinary budget propositions. The two most

important work tools operated by the MFA, however, are the travel support and the media and expert visit schemes, which is why they are worth a closer look.

#### 5.4.1 Travel support scheme

The most direct of the MFA's policy instruments is the travel support scheme, which enables artists and cultural workers to have some of their travel expenses covered in relation to their international work. On the MFA's web page, the scheme is described as follows:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs travel grants scheme is an important tool for helping Norwegian artists to participate on the international scene. Grants are awarded to a large number of artists to help them promote their work abroad, set up launch events, take part in exhibitions, fairs and festivals, and attend seminars and workshops. The management of the grants scheme has been delegated to the cultural institutions the Ministry cooperates with. The scheme is helping to stimulate interest in Norwegian artists and to increase exports of Norwegian culture.<sup>45</sup>

The travel support scheme administrated by the seven advisory organizations on behalf of the MFA is widely regarded as the single most important instrument in order to sustain and promote international cultural activity from Norway. This position is illustrated, for example, by the protest from 19 nationwide organizations representing creative and performing artists in Norway, *the Artists network*,<sup>46</sup> in response to the government's proposed cutback in the 2015 allocation:

The travel funds are particularly important. Usually, the direct, small grants are the ones that make the travel possible, and the foreign institutions are rarely capable of covering such costs. The artist normally invests a substantial part of the international activity within his or her budgets. Hence, these funds uncouple a lot of activity, so the impact of the cuts will be far greater than the amount would indicate.<sup>47</sup>

As indicated by the Artist network's letter, the reason for the support scheme's popularity is its direct effect on artists' and cultural workers' international activity.

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/foreign-affairs/int-cultural-engagement/kultur/cultural-engagement/id2459963/> Retrieved 20.08.2016

<sup>46</sup> In Norwegian: *Kunstnernettverket*. <http://www.kunstnernettverket.no/>

<sup>47</sup> [http://www.kunstnernettverket.no/pdf/20141017\\_horing\\_utenrikskomite.pdf](http://www.kunstnernettverket.no/pdf/20141017_horing_utenrikskomite.pdf) Retrieved 25.08.16

According to many artists, the economic aspects of working abroad is often so marginal that the travel cost could make the entire difference in cases where the artist counts pros and cons as to whether to follow international jobs. Furthermore, because the support scheme is relatively limited and therefore exclusive, its gatekeeping functions could help explain some of its popularity and reputation, i.e. its ability to signal who is competent or not within the arts field (cf. Mangset 1997). The routines for applying to the funds are relatively simple and non-bureaucratic; the applicant fills in and loads up a web-based form, and the reply is often ready as soon as a few weeks after the closing date for the application. Moreover, the grant scheme adapts to the relative instability of international arts, with important jobs, exhibitions, etc. turning up (or being cancelled) on short notice, with a flexible arrangement for applying several times a year (this differs somewhat within the scheme, e.g. Music Norway has four closing dates a year, OCA three, while NFI assesses applications as they come in).

With the exception of the Norwegian Film Institute, which allocates their delegated travel funds administratively, a committee (or in OCA's case a jury) of art experts makes the allocation of the travel grants at an arm's length distance from the MFA. The director of the advisory organization chairs the committee, which apart from its external members also includes a representative of the MFA, who holds an observational position. The additional four experts are appointed by the advisory organization, though in agreement with the MFA. It is also stated in the agreement letter from the MFA that the advisory organization should consult external, relevant art organizations within the actual field, in order to find committee members with as wide mandate as possible from the art field. The representative from the MFA, holding an observational position, is appointed by the ministry and is principally the same official who administers the actual art field within the section for cultural affairs at the MFA home office, i.e. the person is always a diplomat.

The committee members physically meet after two or three weeks of individually assessing the applicants. In the meeting, the assessments are done semi-collectively, i.e. the member with either the previously assigned responsibility or with the highest

qualification within the art form or sub-genre that the applicant states briefly indicates the pros and cons with regard to the applicant and his or her project. According to informants from the advisory organizations (which always hold a central position in the committees), a small discussion over quality assessments or formal objections sometimes occurs, however as a rule the committee collectively complies with the assigned expert's assessment. Because the total budget is of course limited, according to the same informants the allocation is often characterized by site-specific dynamics. In particular, since the members often represent different sub-genres or branches within their area of expertise (e.g. visual arts, film, performance, installation art, etc. within contemporary arts, or dance, theater, dolls theatre within performing arts and so forth), there will often be small turf battles and discussions over the final allocation balance. These premises also cater to more or less open strategic agencies, in support of specific sub-genres or projects that are seen as being especially in need of support.

Questions of legal competence are routinely handled according to governmental practice, i.e. if any of the committee members has a personal or economic interest from an application he or she has to leave the room for the decision. An important feature of the committees is that experts are principally alternated after a maximum of four years (two periods of two years). This is to prevent specific values from congealing within the committee work. However, the cementing of values on a more collective, discursive level is not prevented with this measure, a point that later analyses will attend to.

The expert committee's selection of who is to receive travel grants no doubt substantially represents and adds to the dominant value systems of the Norwegian foreign cultural discourse. As the travel funding is such a central part of the MFA's total cultural policy operations, and hence of Norwegian external cultural policy, what takes place here will inevitably have an impact on the total value system in relation to defining quality in an international context. Both the art world and diplomacy will listen to the quality assessments made here with interest, since they are thought to signal important quality standards. Interesting negotiations on important values, such as artistic quality and feasibility, are carried out on at least two levels. First, the committee work itself

represents an important context of discursive negotiations between art experts, representatives of the advisory organization administrating the funding scheme and (observing) representatives of the MFA. Second, the result from the allocation – what could be called the allocation profile – and what it represents in terms of important values, has an impact within a greater more general context. For instance, the result from one committee may influence on other committees, since certain trends are appropriated as common values. Another example is how values systems established within an expert committee impact on a more general basis within the advisory organization(s) on the section for cultural affairs within the MFA or on the diplomatic discourse.

The allocation is carried out in accordance with the demand principle described above. Because the demand is greater than the number of artists the funds available can support, there will still be a need for a relatively strict prioritization process. Hence, the committees still have the power to make selections based on locally informed and relevant assessments. This calls for an interesting double assessment and filtration of art and artists: first according to relevant international art standards and second according to a domestic, generic value system. It seems clear that between the two, there is a room for negotiations over quality, priorities and strategic choices.

#### 5.4.2 Media and expert visits

The second main policy instrument of Norwegian foreign cultural policy is the *program for the press and high-level (expert) visits*. Its basic purpose is to make Norwegian art and culture known to international media (and subsequently their listeners, viewers and readers), as well as key international art institutions and professionals, by inviting them to what is thought to be the most relevant sites and events Norway can offer. In practice, the scheme aims at reducing barriers for international experts and journalists to visit Norwegian art and artists in Norway by covering all or some of their travel expenses, something that is seen as particularly important given Norway's high cost profile. It also covers some of the costs these events have in order to cater the visits.

The program is therefore designed to stimulate interest in- and demand for Norwegian cultural expressions and artists abroad, subsequently increasing international work opportunities for Norwegian artists. At the MFA's web page, this media and press visit program is described as follows:

Programmes for the press and high-level visits involving the missions abroad, Norwegian cultural institutions and independent bodies and individuals help to increase the visibility of Norwegian culture in international media. The Ministry develops targeted programmes for visits to Norway in cooperation with the arts and culture sector and key institutions, festivals, museums and galleries. International surveys show that interest in Norway as a cultural destination is growing.<sup>48</sup>

According to the government, several hundred visits are made every year by foreign media and art professionals, and of the approximately 400 journalists and additional 400 experts who visit every year, 70% are related to cultural affairs (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013 [White paper report no. 19]). Hence, it is a relatively large amount of funding that is allocated for the program, and, according to the ministry itself, it works. In 2014:

... leading Norwegian festivals and cultural events received support to establish international programs for visiting journalists and business sectors. This contributed to increased knowledge of – and interest in the Norwegian art and cultural scene and a large amount of positive press coverage in social media, foreign professional journals and press. Expert visits have contributed to different types of engagement with Norwegian artists, such as purchase, reviews, exchanges and exhibitions. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2015: 76 [Budget proposition 1 S])

As mentioned, the most important purpose of the scheme is to promote experts and journalists coming to Norway. This is partly to connect Norwegian and foreign expert networks, partly to present Norwegian art to both foreign experts (seen as important opinion leaders and (thus) mediators of art to important international discourses and markets), and to art and culture audiences. Assumedly, this program is closely connected to the in-demand principle that characterizes the Norwegian practice. Because it is not seen as appropriate for the governmental initiatives to too offensively approach foreign markets and contexts, but rather facilitate for interest and demand

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/foreign-affairs/int-cultural-engagement/kultur/cultural-engagement/id2459963/> Retrieved 20.08.2016

that exist locally, it makes perfect sense to make Norwegian art and artists available to this demand side through marketing.

The way the scheme works in practice, and it should be noted that it is very flexible in its operations, is that both Norwegian and foreign actors could apply for the expert or media visit program:

... Visit programs are organized both at the embassies, by the advisory organizations and at other key arts venues in Norway, including the rich flora of festivals in all artistic fields. Through this visit program, meeting places for all genres, where Norwegian artists through media and expert visits get to know key players in relevant foreign institutions and communities, are created. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013: 23 [White paper report no. 19])

It is often not really an application process at all. Most of the time, foreign experts or journalists familiar with the scheme contact the relevant Foreign Service mission, asking for some help for traveling to the desired event in Norway. Sometimes it is the other way around, as employees at the Foreign Service missions invite or call on experts or journalists to go to a cultural event taken to be of interest. A third way is Norwegian festivals organizing specific programs for international guest experts and media, in order to present artists, the festival, associated Norwegian networks, etc. on a broader scale. In these cases, the festivals and the Foreign Service missions in the preferred territories cooperate on reaching out to the most prestigious and relevant experts and journalists seen to have the maximum impact within their respective networks or audiences.

The organizing and implementation of visits from foreign experts and media persons is a very important part of the cooperation between the MFA and the art field/advisory organizations, and the scheme is explicitly mentioned and described in the MFA advisory organization agreements. In this cooperation, the Foreign Service in particular plays a crucial role:

While institutions in Norway can apply for economic support to invite key partners to Norway, the Foreign Service shall commence in the work of making key local institutions and venues familiar with Norwegian artists, relevant institutions and venues in Norway, so that Norwegian agents are seen as relevant partners. The missions are therefore working systematically to identify key partners to invite to Norway, and the arenas in Norway that should take part in such visits. The work is done in close consultation with key institutions and individual agents in Norway. The advisory organizations are the main facilitators on the Norwegian side, in collaboration with artists and other institutions. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013: 24 [White paper report no. 19])

In addition to being very flexible, the scheme is also very personal, almost intimate. Norwegian festivals and artists get to meet and hang out with the experts and journalists, entering into relationships that for many become more than professional contact. Instead, many of the networks are a mix of personal friendships and professional cooperation, pertaining to what I later argue is a sophisticated network-based entrepreneurial practice. However, this networking is difficult and demanding. Following up visitors personally takes both time and economic resources. As the visits are mostly a cooperation between organizations, the MFA at home, Foreign Service missions, artists, external institutions and so on, in addition to the experts, the potential for misunderstandings and schemes falling short of the visitors' expectations appears significant. Consequently, this scheme constitutes an especially interesting object of study, since it offers a densely knit composite of discursive rationalities and practices.

## 5.5 Chapter conclusions

In this first of four analysis chapters, the organizational structures of Norwegian foreign cultural policy, more specifically those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have been outlined and analyzed. Through the analysis of the MFA's organizational structure, its mandate, aims and strategies, instruments and art world partners, the analytical idea was to respond to the first part of the main research question of the study. That is, to investigate in what ways culture and cultural policy are conceived within a foreign policy discourse. In this approach, cultural policy texts, primarily the gray literature concerning this field, were the primary empirical source, emphasizing the point that there is a strong link between policy thinking, articulation and practice. The two latter hence form the empirical basis of the coming analysis chapters.

Central to the analysis presented was the MFA's relatively new organizational model, building on the arm's length principle. From 2003, most of the ministry's operational power was delegated to the art world (or rather, parts of it) through a transfer of responsibility to select Norway's official art and artist profile, and to advise the MFA on art issues, to seven art organizations and a number of appurtenant, subordinate expert



committees. At the same time, an increased focus on the already existing in-demand principle was stressed, securing international demand as a prerequisite for state engagement in art export or international cooperation projects. Where the MFA, and in particular diplomacy, were earlier able to launch international projects on their own initiative, with art and artists of their choice, this possibility was from now strictly reduced. This reorganizing resulted in a change of mindset within the ministry. Culture and art were now seen more as part of a strict cultural policy mandate. This eased two problems known from previous practice, namely tensions over instrumental uses of the arts, and an alleged lack of competence to make artistic decisions and selections within the ministry. Despite this development, a couple of interesting problems remain, given the premise that the foreign cultural policy should be focused on the arm's length principle. First, the fact that there is a distance between a home and an abroad discourse within foreign (cultural) policy, leading to a situation where what seems relevant and interesting from a domestic perspective does not necessarily make sense in a local context. Second, a foreign policy employment of an arm's length principle is also challenged by the diplomacy's operational character and work mode. Being operational means making numerous micro-decisions, leading to local cultural policy profiles that do not necessarily represent a 1:1 match with the intent of the home office, or the domestic art sector's needs or desires. In any case, both issues will be further discussed in Chapter 9.

Another central element discussed in this chapter relates to the main rationalities that underlie the MFA's cultural work. Three such rationalities are found: a cultural, foreign and trade policy rationality. From a practice where the focus was primarily on cultural and foreign policy rationales, it is argued that this has changed to one where, from a MFA point of view, commercial and trade policy thinking is seen as increasingly important. Given the fact that the art field has concurrently gained power over foreign cultural affairs, this is interesting and perhaps a little surprising. Apart from a new government with a clear trade policy focus on everything they do, the answer seems to lie in a changed focus within central agents, focusing more on quality and

professionalism criteria in the international approach. The development consequently has gone from mainly a focus on cooperation and exchange, to a more competitive perspective focusing on the promotion of high-quality culture and art, with commercial prospects as a significant component. Also, this issue will be the subject of further discussions in analysis Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

With those words, the focus now moves to some of the ways culture is legitimated within foreign policy. That is, how the conceptions described and analyzed above are used and justified. On an overarching level, the MFA's cultural work is explained in relation to two arguments, both closely connected to the principal character of the ministry and to foreign policy in general: The first argument relates to the argument that all Norwegian citizens and interests abroad, artists and their interests included, are entitled to relevant support from the ministry. In that respect, artists are treated no differently from representatives of other businesses or sectors. Moreover, as it is widely agreed in the Norwegian political discourse that the arts and culture are a public responsibility, the arts and culture, like all other sectors increasingly internationalized, are entitled to (MFA) support in such an endeavor. In fact, in their own opinion, no public service is better qualified in these matters than the MFA. The second argument for the MFA to support the arts and culture is its capacity to contribute to Norway's reputation as a competitive (cultural) nation, both at home (our internal self-image) and abroad (our external image). From a foreign policy perspective, Norwegian art and culture has thus become an important part of Norway's global interface: its principal relation to the "other."

## **6. Legitimation of culture I: Art as an end**

In the former chapter, the attention was directed towards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) mandate and organization in terms of its work with culture. It concluded that this mandate is based on three policy rationalities, all being important in order to understand how culture and cultural policy are interpreted within a foreign policy context. It also concluded that of the three, the business policy has gained importance in relation to the cost of cultural and foreign policy, perhaps most prominently the latter of the two. In this, and in the next two chapters, this picture is elaborated on, focusing on the factors that legitimate culture's relevance to foreign policy in general and the MFA in particular. These three chapters hence relate directly to the second part of the thesis' research question, asking how culture and cultural policy are legitimized within current foreign policy. That means it is also a study of what it is that legitimizes culture as part of foreign policy, asking what values or qualities culture has that justify this position. The analytical point of departure is therefore that foreign cultural policy can be much explained from the impacts that culture and art are thought to have on society. The aim of this chapter is to examine how this occurs, specifically focusing on how it legitimates culture and cultural policy within foreign policy discourse.

Again, the empirical grounds are Norwegian foreign policy and the MFA. Where the former chapter, focusing on how culture and cultural policy are conceived within a foreign policy discourse, mainly relied on textual empirical material, the following chapters make use of more traditional anthropological ethnography. In addition to some written texts, mainly policy documents and media coverage, the empirical material to a large degree consists of interview and observational data. This of course adds a dimension, as it also empirically elaborates on the conceptions of culture found in the gray literature presented and analyzed in Chapter 5. Thus, it gives valuable insight to not only how the policies are stated, but also how they are interpreted by the ones set to implement them.

As stated, the section of the thesis dealing with the values or impacts from the arts on society, which legitimize culture and cultural policy's position in foreign policy, is divided into three separate chapters. They each deal with three modes of such social impact. Chapter 6 examines culture and art's place within foreign policy in terms of being an end in itself. It therefore starts with analyzing what has become an important part of the cultural policy rationale, the principle of supporting art for art's own sake. In Chapter 7, which centers on how culture and art are legitimized within foreign policy and its institutional branches, the interest is directed towards how culture and art are seen as being capable of reflecting national specificity. More specifically, the aim is to investigate how art is seen as having representative functions that in different ways favorably promote national interests. Such interests are further specified in two categories, narrow interests that serve particular art world interests such as visual arts or design, or broad interests, which serve Norwegian interests at large. It is also analyzed according to an internal and external dimension, claiming that branding Norway and Norwegianness (with the use of culture) is not only serving an aim of establishing desirable images of Norway abroad, but is also directed inwards in terms of self-image reflexivity. In Chapter 8, culture and art's commercial potential, i.e. its ability to generate economic profit, both for the artists and for the state, is critically investigated. This capacity is central within creative industry rhetoric, and hence is a central part of how the arts are legitimized, also within foreign policy.

Before turning the attention to how culture and art are legitimized through the concept of art for art's sake (and subsequently as a means of promoting general national interests), let me make a brief revisit of the issues that were discussed in Chapter 2.2 by presenting a model that roughly outlines culture's alleged impact on society. The purpose of the model is to serve as an analytical tool that on the one hand displays four dimensions of such an impact, while on the other pertaining to an understanding of these impacts as principally interdependent, thereby challenging rigid conceptions on instrumentalism and calling for a more sophisticated discussion of legitimation.

## **6.1 Social impacts from culture and art – cultural value revisited**

Despite different strategies and modes of operation, governmental cultural policy approaches aimed at international contexts all involve securing a number of national interests as their basis. A number of more or less well-documented effects on society are linked to international cultural activity, as a continuous and important legitimization of governmental cultural policies has been a strong belief in these socio-economic impacts of culture. Hence, in addition to seeing art as an end in itself, a range of more or less instrumental gains from the arts have been suggested and negotiated in order to explain why subsidies to the arts make sense (Belfiore and Bennett 2008, O'Brien 2010). These suggested potential socio-economic impacts of culture range from its capacity to secure social cohesion, innovation and creativity, improved learning, well-being and health, sustainability, local, regional and national economy, communication and interactions, to its positive impact on society and social behavior.

An obstinate hallmark of these potential impacts, however, has been their hypothetical status; it has been repeatedly shown to be difficult to prove these impacts scientifically, in particular in terms of causal relations. Whereas some researchers have worked on this challenge, intending to either substantiate or reject the alleged effects from arts and culture on society, others have instead looked at how and why such beliefs in socio-cultural impacts from arts and culture arise, and how they have made up grounds for negotiating cultural policy designs and scopes. Typically, they have researched the arts' social civilizing potential (Bjørnsen 2009), empowering the capacity with underprivileged or vulnerable groups' (Travis and Deepak 2011) ability to improve public health (Cuypers, Krokstad et al. 2011), the effect on increasing children's learning abilities (Kluball 2000), and their capacity to develop and improve regional attractiveness (Florida 2008). Finally, there have been a large number of attempts to determine and measure the economic impacts of the arts (Reeves 2002, Cohen, Schaffer et al. 2003, Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005, Seaman 2011, Hesmondhalgh 2013).

Even though most of the research literature on the socio-economic impacts of arts and culture engage with the issue in regional or national contexts, in this thesis I claim that many of the same effects are just as central within an international policy context, in which they hold a similar function of legitimating cultural policy. Foreign cultural policy discourse – policy documents, strategies, promo material, funding applications (and rejections), formal and informal speech, even social media – are all full of expectations and lofty rhetoric about the cultural, political and economic impacts from the arts (Wyszomirski, Burgess et al. 2003, Bound, Briggs et al. 2007, Schneider 2009, Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2009, Minnaert 2012, Nisbett 2013, Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013). Many of these impacts are quite similar to the national effects listed above.

For pedagogical purposes, these interests could roughly be seen as part of a four-dimensional matrix (Figure 1). The first two dimensions span specific aims and interests, respectively, within internal and external contexts, while the next two consider general effects within the internal and external domain:

	<b>Internal interests/effects</b>	<b>External interests/effects</b>
<b>Specific (art) interests/effects</b>	Impulses and income from international artists, institutions and audiences, legitimacy	Improved reputation (more attractive) of Norwegian art scene internationally
<b>General (instrumental) interests/effects</b>	Identity production – productive self-images – cultural unity	Improved reputation, better social, political and economic position

Figure 1: Four dimensions of social impacts from culture and art

Specific interests (assumedly yielding specific effects) are mostly the ones that are referred to as the purely cultural policy interests of the policies, or efforts that attend to the arts for the arts' own sake (Bound, Briggs et al. 2007). They range from international art cooperation, i.e. operations of a so-called reciprocal character (cf. Chapter 5.2),

where art and artists enter into artistic partnerships with international peers, co-productions, art and artist exchanges, etc., to the activities where artists compete in international arenas to display and make a living off their artistic work. Interests that are more explicitly competitive relate to art, artists and art organizations, which with different degrees of commercial ambitions enter international distribution channels and art markets. Here, the foreign cultural policy discourse largely intersects and is influenced/affected by a cultural or creative industry discourse (see e.g. Hesmondhalgh 2013), as it currently seems in an increasingly growing manner. Because economic aims are often viewed as instrumental, this is an example that what is often seen as intrinsic goals of the arts can concurrently be interpreted as instrumental. It is also an example of the fact that instrumentalism is something that is negotiable within the art world, and which can be seen along a continuum of more or less legitimate forms (I return to this in Chapter 8).

General interests and effects, often referred to as explicitly instrumental, typically relate to foreign policy and economic aims and objectives that take on a wider work mode than simply to serve the arts (cf. Mangset 1997). These range from external interests like the above-listed nation branding, aimed at maintaining or improving the national reputation, to more concrete objectives of improving national positions in important political or economic markets and territories. Moreover, there is a link between the two; some marketing theory holds that a strong national reputation could help selling products – what is known as the country-of-origin effect. The same theory also exists in an inverse version, namely that particularly strong products or trademarks could help in improving national reputations, thus making nation-brands more attractive as a whole (White 2012).

Starting from the model displayed above (Figure 1), the next chapter focuses on the impacts that are seen to have a specific effect on the art field, both at home and abroad.

## 6.2 Art for art's sake

The grounds for the device of art for art's sake is a strong belief in the intrinsic values within art, and thus in the arts as an end in itself: the production, appropriation and evaluation of art should only be in favor of the art itself (Bell-Villada 1996, Røyseng 2007). This abstraction of artistic or cultural policy activity includes an interesting, somewhat paradoxical devaluation of artistic agency, leading to artists often showing a remarkable *disinterest* in worldly or profane personal profits from their artistic work. Rather, he or she works altruistically for the art. The art for art's sake rationality is, in addition to forming an important ideological position within the arts, surprisingly internalized throughout Western cultural policy (Belfiore and Bennett 2008), consequently constituting important parts of the legitimation for the support of art through cultural policy. One expressive example from Norwegian cultural policy is found at the very introduction to the most recent white paper report from the Ministry of Culture, in which it is stated that a key object of the report "is to display professional art and cultural activity as a value of its own" (Ministry of Kulturdepartementet 2003: 7 [White paper report no. 48]).<sup>49</sup> Also within Norwegian foreign cultural policy, the art for art's sake principle looms. For example, in White paper report no. 19, where it is stated in the introduction, "Arts and culture give everyday life meaning and has a value in itself" (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013: 5 [White paper report no. 19]). Since so many of the features of internal (domestic) cultural policy are also present in foreign cultural policy, this should come as no surprise, particularly when considering that the MFA's practices since 2003 have become more integrated with the art world.

Perhaps equally important as being a description of the arts' specific values and features, the art for art's sake principle represents an art world stand towards instrumentalism, at least in terms of rhetoric. For example, in an interview with the Norwegian art

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<sup>49</sup> The quote is translated from Norwegian to English by the author of the thesis.



magazine *Kunstkritikk.no*<sup>50</sup> in 2012, the reputable artist Lene Berg, who represented Norway at the Nordic pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2013, says:

Given that art gets more and more attention as part of an exclusive lifestyle, the risk is that the entire field is reduced to an “image-builder” for nations and individuals, whether by the means of private or public money. The art field is not automatically autonomous, but it still has such a potential, such a possibility. That art is part of the financial market, and thus of the speculation economy that plagues our world, is neither new nor strange, but for something interesting to occur, the field has to offer these interests resistance and insist that art is about something else and more than creating fictitious values for rich people.

This rhetoric is typical for many artists who feel their autonomy is threatened, most prominently by instrumental, market-based ideologies. However, as I have discussed previously, and will discuss more in the following, in the empirical world this type of rhetoric has perhaps lost some of its power, as issues of instrumentalism to a much larger degree are objects of negotiations and pragmatic trade-offs.

### 6.2.1 Art for art’s sake’s abstract and concrete level

Within cultural policy, including *foreign* cultural policy, the art for art’s sake idea is found in several forms and operationalizations. Next, I will discuss two in particular. First, I turn to the way art for art’s sake denotes an abstraction of the art’s intrinsic values. Next, I focus on the concrete level of this, the in many ways logical assumption that in order to secure symbolic art for art’s sake profits, one has to support artists. Consequently, despite the fact that art for art’s sake from one (a rhetorical) perspective devaluates artistic profit, from a strictly pragmatic point of view it seeks to secure the arts through securing artists. In practice, an operationalization of art for art’s sake will hence be not only a cultural or art policy, but also an artist policy.

Most prominently, however, the art for art’s sake principle is pronounced within the frame of a tautology, the claim that art on an existential level is needed, but not for one (or any) particular reason (Bell-Villada 1996). As previously asserted, a hegemonic view

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<sup>50</sup> [www.kunstkritikk.no/artikler/ti-sporsmal-lene-berg/?d=no](http://www.kunstkritikk.no/artikler/ti-sporsmal-lene-berg/?d=no), retrieved 24.4.2015. Translated from Norwegian to English by author of the thesis.

particularly within the art discourse, but also within a more general social discourse, maintains that art has a certain intrinsic value that despite the fact that it is hard to pinpoint accurately, still represents something profoundly human. It is often denoted in terms of something spiritual, and some have even explained culture and art as an equivalent of- and modern replacement to religious needs (Rorty 1998, Shusterman 2008). Therefore, within the art for art's sake logic, the value of culture and art is articulated not only in terms of being meaningful and important as a source of appreciation, but more strongly as part of principal human rights and needs. One important operationalization of this justification goes through the many principally good effects coming from freedom of expression, for example as it is proclaimed in the UN's declaration on human rights, Article 19.<sup>51</sup>

In foreign cultural discourse, this rationale is found to be prominently placed in the introductory part of White paper report no. 19 from 2013, where it is stated:

Access to culture and the opportunity to express oneself creatively are important aspects of a modern democracy. Arts and culture give everyday life meaning and has a value in itself. A free cultural life strengthens freedom of expression, equality and tolerance, and development and learning. It is a quality of a society that there is good access to a diversity of artistic and cultural expressions, and that everyone has the opportunity to express themselves through such expressions. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013: 5)<sup>52</sup>

Here, arts and culture is not only presented as a value in itself. To acknowledge this value is just as much presented as a quality of a society, something that as a result that legitimates support for art on its own terms. Somewhat ironically, making the art for art's sake rhetoric part of a policy inevitably makes this strategy instrumental, a point made by Vestheim (1994).

The position of the art for art's sake logic held within the art world is perhaps best illustrated by how it breaks through, even in sub-sectors that are traditionally seen as

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<sup>51</sup> See: [http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/udhr\\_article\\_19.html](http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/udhr_article_19.html)

<sup>52</sup> As previously stated, all quotes from White paper report no. 19, 2013, are translated from Norwegian to English by the author of the thesis.

relatively commercially driven. One example of this is the film sector. Even here, intrinsic value and aims seeking to promote art for art's sake stay persistently evident. One informant working with Norwegian film in international markets explains how films are distributed to both large, commercial- and smaller, less commercial festivals, and with completely different rationales:

At the large festivals and markets, that is where the commercial part takes place. There are no buyers, no distributors, no agents present at the small festivals. It is a local audience. It is, for example, of absolutely no interest for one that works to sell his or her films to other territories. Then you have to go to the large festivals and markets.

When I ask the informant what then drives filmmakers and businesses to go to smaller venues and festivals, which they do, despite the relatively high costs, the answer is:

**I:** Well, it is to promote Norwegian film culture within a broader and more long-term framework, so that audiences present in that particular country can get to know and to relate to Norwegian movies. It is not so that they are to buy tickets.

**R:** That is an aim in itself?...

**I:** Yes, we think so. The long-term work is very important. But, it is not directly sales-oriented or sales-triggering, or how you want to put it, in the way big festivals are. Then, on the other side, you could say that an event in Rio, where perhaps other artists, musicians perform, and where Norwegian movies are projected, there you could perhaps invite a different audience, perhaps people from business, etc. that could become aware of Norwegian movies. That in turn, in time, could lead to something more, right... even if it is undefinable.

**I:** Undefinable?

**R:** It is somewhat undefinable.

**I:** So that Norway can eh... show off, or?

**R:** Norway should be visible in the same way that other countries are. For example, we tend to compare ourselves a lot with Denmark and Sweden. And, they are really good at this, and we meet a lot of people that say –we cooperate with the Danish and the Swedish Film Institute, and receive help for this and that, but not from Norway... Just as an example.

**I:** So, at the end of the day, this is about the Norwegian self-esteem? That Norway compares itself with the Swedes and the Danes and wants to be up there?

**R:** Well... I don't know if there is an explicit competition, because we cooperate a lot with both of them at the Film Institute level. But, I guess we tend to think that it is right that Norwegian film culture is visible abroad.

The informant further tells about Norwegian films winning prizes in small insignificant festivals, events and markets, and how despite its insignificance, this is still very pleasing:

After we have finished the most important part of our job, movies tend to keep on living their own lives. And, as they are picked up here and there, you barely notify with the producer, who most likely says –sure, just send it to Uzbekistan. And, then it wins the audience prize there. And, we might not even know, if not for the producer's report, and it hardly has anything to say for the recognition at home for that movie. But, in terms of recognition, it is prizes and acceptance to festivals that are measured. Some have been, well... they have disagreed and been critical to that, saying, –well, is that what we should do, sit there counting? Why can't we just let the movies do well abroad?

Another informant, working with the internationalization of Norwegian literature, holds a similar view as the representative of the film industry. In an interview where the discussion touches on why it is desirable to reach out to an international market or audience with Norwegian art, the discussion soon centers on Norwegian books being sold to smaller markets. When asked why it is so great that Norwegian books are being translated and sold in Bulgaria, the answer is:

**I:** Eh, well, perhaps it is a common knowledge that we share with the publishers and most of all the authors, that when you write in a small language, then it is great to be published in a language that gives you more readers. That allows you to reach further out. That is a profit in itself.

**R:** So, to reach out is simply a professional art objective of its own?

**I:** Yes... yes. But, the way we see things, there are several perspectives present in this at the same time. One element is export. That what you have done is motivated by trying to create revenues back from those countries, and that we think that will improve the writers' income. That they can profit directly from people buying their books abroad. That is important to us. And it is that fact that we want to be part of a cultural exchange. And... to be part of building Norway's reputation out there. Well, that is not the main element to us, but it is part of it too.

**R:** The main element is the sales?

**I:** Well, more to get Norwegian literature translated so that it can... in a long-term give something in terms of more readers and income to the writers. But also the objective that we believe is important, that if a book is translated, than that says something about the level of the culture of the country from which it comes, right. If our literature is translated, then that tells me it is good. Because, then it compares with the world literature. So, in a way, it is a benchmark of where we stand as a nation, culturally. Also, I think that as literature is translated, something is returned, that is not economic profit but expertise, knowledge, about... Authors often tell that it was first as they were translated to other languages that they really did understand... what it was all about. So it is so much learning in getting impulses from other parts of the world. Back to the authors, back to us. And we try to mediate that knowledge that our books brings us, to the Norwegian discourse.

Interestingly, the informant here seems to give the artwork some kind of an agency, something that I interpret as an operationalization of the art for art's sake device in practice. Both the idea that a film or a novel can perform well, live its own life so to say, without us knowing it, and that it is seen as capable of contributing to absorbing and bringing back impulses and knowledge, stressing the intrinsic value of that object.

### 6.2.2 Artist policies as art policy

As stated above, within an art for art's sake rationality, the focus is primarily aimed on art rather than artist agency and interest. However, this rhetoric still has to have some sort of operationalization on an individual or institutional level. In the empirical material, numerous examples of such operationalizations are found, often characterized by an emphasis on the outcome from art and artistic activity close to many of the classic ideals

of the arts, and relating to areas that are often seen as central to artists or cultural workers on a deeper, more emotional level. Much of this is about being true to a certain art-specific ethos, within an international art context, for example the impulse to stay curious and sensitive towards the international art discourse, or the fear of becoming provincial and out of touch with relevant innovation and experimentation (Becker 1984, Moulin 1992, Abbing 2002). The focus is thus on how international artistic activity is a source of personal or institutional education, self-exploration or inspiration.

The perhaps most commonly come across rationale related to internationalization connects to more or less specific forms of learning. Artists often explain international activity in terms of a need or wish to get to know new audiences, peers and institutions, seeking new quality standards and benchmarks against which they can work, and, if possible, contribute. This object, as we recall, is also very clearly reflected in the policy of the MFA, heavily emphasizing the aspects of the policy aimed at giving artists the possibility to develop within an international context. One informant from the Norwegian National Museum epitomizes this rationale, as she explains:

Basically, what it's really all about is to strive for a goal of high quality. And to "compete," in quotation marks, internationally, perhaps means something else than to compete at home. There will always be important institutions around the world that we admire, that are better, that get done more, that do things better than we do. And it is a goal to strive for just that. We will always try to be better, that is the bottom line.

Entering international networks is often seen as an efficient way of initiating such learning. The same informant further explains how this takes place, illustrating it with the museum's participation at an ICAM conference in New York the same fall, hosted by MoMA:

Of course, it is super important to be there. To learn from them, make new contacts, get to know what they are doing there, what kind of strategies they work with, both when it comes to collecting, conservation, exhibitions – the entire field one works within. I think it is about, on a fundamental level, a will to improve. And then you have to measure yourself internationally.

As the informant here asserts, taking part in international networks is a way of benchmarking your enterprise. And, quality within an international context is something

completely different from quality at home. One of the informants, a senior diplomat working at the embassy in London, touches on the same point, saying:

London is an important place to be exposed for artists and cultural workers who have international ambitions. The cultural life here is, and that is of course also a backdrop to our activities – and the same thing could be said about other places, right... – but, the backdrop here is that the cultural life is extremely diverse and on an extremely high level, both for British and international art. And, you know, that level, that is the level to match in order to make it. And amateurs, for example, we don't support them at all. It has to be on a high professional level.

This perspective relates to the previously listed aim of seeking recognition. Perhaps particularly within art forms that have a small, immature home market or audience, foreign peers or audiences (or buyers for that matter) will form a welcome potential of informed recognition. Such recognition may hold great value, both on a personal level, and also within a framework of symbolic and cultural capital, in which consecration from internationally renowned gatekeepers may prove to be important strategic, field-specific assets (Becker 1984, Bourdieu 1984, 2000 [1993]).

The learning aspect is also emphasized by a third informant, coming from the field of performing arts:

Well, we become better from learning from others. And then others, hopefully, become better from learning from us too. But, most importantly to us, and why we travel, is to learn from others.

Here, the informant additionally touches upon a related aspect, concerning the idea that in the same way that we can learn from others, others may have something to learn from us. Several of the informants emphasize such a mutual learning as a key potential in international work. One informant, coming from the performing arts field, explains in more detail what lies in this potential:

The right match! That the relevant institutions and actors meet, and that there is a real desire to learn something from each other, and that you see equality in terms of what one has to offer and what one wants to receive. The cooperation should take place over some considerable time, and the results will often be measurable only after some time.

This principle, which is often referred to by using the term *reciprocity*, is central not only to the informants in this study; it is also an important part of the MFA's foreign cultural policy, both stated in key cultural policy texts (white paper reports and budget propositions) and referred to by its ministry officials (in interviews with MFA staff). One

example is White paper report no. 19 from 2013, in which the arts' capability to take part in a *global cultural conversation*, denoting being able to both be part of a two-way (reciprocal) dialogue *and* to be able to make its voice heard (and implicitly sometimes even to win debates) is firmly articulated (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013).

As mentioned in Chapter 5.2.3, in its most offensive forms the idea that we have something to teach peers or enrich audiences with in other countries touches on an imperialist note. One informant from the architecture and design field speculated around this motivation for internationalization:

I think it relates to... that is me speculating, but I think it has something to do with old-fashioned imperialist thinking about us showing... We believe we are the best, so we should go ahead and tell others how they should be or should do.

Even though the art field on a rhetorical level intuitively places itself far from such an imperialist approach, not least since it breaches with the reciprocity principle, it is a factor to be included, as it often takes place on an unconscious level. In particular, this may occur as representatives of the liberal, democratic developed West meet peers from developing countries or Eastern Europe. Important self-reflexivity is hence important to include as part of foreign cultural work. One interesting example that came along as a bonus to the empirical material of this project relates to the exhibition displayed at the Nordic pavilion during the 2014 Venice Biennale. It dealt with Norwegian architects acting as consultants to a range of comprehensive building projects in Africa in the 1960s. In light of belated wisdom, what in the first place was intended to be bottom-up, peer-based and in line with an equal-footing principle, could be criticized for its failure to meet with these noble objectives. This example should, and I think this was also the clear intention behind the exhibition, act as a reminder in order to maintain a continued focus on the self-reflexivity needed in this field. One of the informants, this one from the literary field, indicates through her argument that this awareness is present to some degree:

Clearly, we feel that our children's literature has a lot to offer, and, we would like to promote that. However, also clearly, a lot of others too have a children's literature that has a lot to offer. So, it is a

risk that we think we have so much to offer that we overrun others, that it becomes a one-way dialogue, right. With the way we are organized, working for literature export... that could be a risk. Then, it is important that we are extremely dialogue-based and open to taking in what we actually receive travelling abroad. And, that is something we experience every day: the fact that we learn so immensely from the network we have in many countries, it is of course very important that we bring that back home. That dimension is something we try to... we hold it highly.

This is an example of how the two strategical concepts of reciprocity and competition are negotiated, a very important part of any artist's or cultural worker's way of relating to an international art discourse, in which art world rules require certain standards. Such standards, which in the case of authoritative conceptions of how to engage morally in the arts include humility and an openness to what other professional communities have to offer, regardless of the business climate otherwise.

### 6.2.3 Towards pragmatism?

Within a cultural policy discourse, the phrase art for art's sake is widely renowned and appreciated, denoting on the one hand a celebration of what is thought to be the intrinsic value of art, and on the other, an ideological stand away from any didactic, moral or utilitarian function ascribed to it. To facilitate for this function within the arts has therefore become somewhat of a moral question for politicians, bureaucrats, academia and artists themselves. It has become a question of whether or not to let the arts stay free and autonomous, responsible to no one other than its own ethos. At the same time, more than anything, the art for art's sake phrase is a rhetorical device, as data shows pragmatic agents wanting both artistic and instrumental effects from international arts. In the field of foreign cultural relations, such aspects represent central sources of meaning production, and are potentially important in the discursive play of practice, in which the values of different discourses meet and (potentially) conflict. In practice, this makes up the ground for intense discursive negotiations.

One example of such negotiations relates to artists' appropriation of some specific virtues or values within the arts, like, i.a. honesty, purity, vulnerability and authenticity (Bell-Villada 1996). In one of the interviews, conflicting values are illustrated particularly well through the case of exhibiting Norwegian architecture abroad, in the form of one of the MFA's travelling architecture exhibitions. Every five years, the Architecture and



Design department of the National Museum of Art in Oslo produces an overview exhibition presented abroad under the name *Contemporary Norwegian Architecture*<sup>53</sup> (see Illustration 1). The exhibitions are produced in close cooperation with the Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, showing highlights of contemporary Norwegian architecture through 50 of the best buildings produced in Norway or by Norwegian architects abroad during the current five-year period.

However, how these exhibitions are designed and applied is a source of discussions, e.g. in terms of producing a specialized (elitist) versus a more popular presentation, or giving a professional (objective) versus a favorable picture of Norwegian architecture, in which



Illustration 1: From the exhibition *Contemporary Norwegian Architecture # 7*; photo: The National Museum/Anne Hansteen Jarre

the latter serves general Norwegian interests. One informant from this field explains:

... well, talking about strategies and pronounced aims, etc., I don't think it is written down anywhere, but there are always some people at the MFA or the Foreign Service missions, working with Norway promotion, that want something easily digestible. That shows Norwegian architecture in 1-2-3. And

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<sup>53</sup> See more at: [http://www.nasjonalnuseet.no/en/exhibitions\\_and\\_events/international/](http://www.nasjonalnuseet.no/en/exhibitions_and_events/international/)

that is not always that simple, we put up some resistance there, because we believe... if we are to show Norwegian architecture, then we have to do it properly.

To the MFA, these exhibitions are a play of balancing the sector's needs with the fact that a great deal of their audiences are not experts. In addition, the MFA has a need for the exhibition to be as practical as possible. To travel with an entire architectural exhibition is both time and cost consuming. These factors influence the ministry's motivation for fully agreeing with the National Museum in their ambitions and expectations. The informant further tells:

Presumably, they [the MFA] support that... they support our thinking in terms of being a relevant, cooperating museum, and a professional expert partner towards international museums and arenas. But... at the same time, they have a very prominent need to make visible the quality in what is being built in Norway today, right... and that is fine. The MFA seems very engaged in these portraying contemporary Norway.

Thus, the informant explains that while the MFA is mostly engaged with displaying Norwegian architectural successes, the National Museum is busier displaying this architecture within a broader picture. That includes also telling about the not so successful approaches, or to be honest about the aspects of this field, which do not fully meet the standards of international actors and institutions.

Even though issues like unfortunate instrumentalism or a loss of autonomy are clearly a prominent part of the discourse, the art world still seems quite pragmatic in questions about, e.g. instrumental aims, as long as they are in control over some crucial elements of the cooperation process. They want to maintain a certain degree of professionalism, i.e. that art experts decide, and not outsiders. There is a general idea that only the arts themselves are capable of making legitimate decisions in questions on art. As Nisbett argues, most art-sector informants are fully capable of avoiding what they see as unfortunate instrumental aims, and go with the ones they find legitimate (2012). The same point is made by the Norwegian author Erik Fosnes Hansen, who argues that most artists could not care less about the principally problematic sides to an instrumental cultural policy, as long as these instrumental aims are *good and agreed* (2013). In other words, artists feel free to enter projects of instrumental aims when they feel the aims

are good and legitimate. Since different artists will always have different ideals for what is good and legitimate, this attitude consequently reflects a quite pragmatic position.

As illustrated above, central here is to be able to do things “properly” or “authentically,” in the meaning of *not* doing a quick fix. What this means is quite open, and hence negotiable. One aspect of this operationalization of autonomy of the arts is that art that has been performed, prepared (e.g. curated) or presented by artists, cultural workers or art professionals in a way that is seen as vaccinated, and thus to a certain degree immune to (additional) instrumental strategies. The higher amount of prestige the art professional has, the higher the art (co)production is elevated over trivial worries of being infected by unfortunate instrumentalism. For the MFA to cooperate with reputed artists or cultural worker therefore both reduces tensions in their cooperation with the arts, and opens for pragmatic solutions also catering to general (in addition to specialist) interests. In an interview, an informant from the Norwegian National Museum explains how this was the case, as a curated exhibition was applied within an instrumental context:

It does have something to say that the exhibition we made about Norwegian contemporary architecture maintains professional standards, that it is properly and well made. At some point, it was placed in, where was it, Bratislava or something, and then Innovation Norway included themselves in our plans. And that is... we usually don't cooperate with them, but they thought it was convenient to place their event, aiming to sell Norwegian architecture, in conjunction with our exhibition. That could have resulted in a conflict, but that was not my experience, because we sort of don't have anything to do with each other. There are no ties between us that require that we stand together through thick and thin, it is just that they make use of an exhibition about Norwegian architecture that is already standing there to “sell,” in quotation marks, Norwegian architectural services. I can definitely see that this could be... and that is, I guess, the discussion that we enter into when we say that we don't want to make that light stuff that aims to sell Norwegian architects. Our job is to exhibit Norwegian architecture, not... it isn't necessarily aimed at seeing to it that more Norwegian architects get jobs abroad. That is not our goal, right. So we have to be sort of clear about what we want with our exhibitions.

Cooperations between parts with instrumental and artistic aims are not problematic to this art professional, as long as the work – the object – was done right, as long as it maintained a professional standard. The knowledge that the object is well made or curated, according to the standards of the trade, means that it does not have to relate to, and is thus not in danger of being polluted from uses or interpretations outside of itself. Pollution in this sense could, for example, be purely instrumental uses. Here, we

are close to the symbolic, intrinsic value of art referred to in the chapter introduction; the idea that as long as the artwork is authorized – e.g. made or performed by a formally or symbolically authorized artist – it does not have to relate to any value system other than itself. It becomes (or rather is made) self-referential. Nonetheless, there is a danger that if the instrumental use deviates too much from what are regarded as dominant values within the art discourse, it will devalue even art that is otherwise considered great. As the informant above asserts, e.g. in the case that the motif of exhibiting the architecture becomes overly dominated by the aim of selling architectural consultancy services, it could prove problematic. Where such a borderline between acceptable and unacceptable promotion goes, however, is not very clear, and does depend on a number of other variables as well.

Another important aspect to the autonomy of the arts is freedom (Bell-Villada 1996, Belfiore 2006, Crane 2009). From the arts perspective, it is seen as important to be able to stay critical, something that becomes difficult as one enters an approach guided by an instrumental aim. The National Museum informant asserts:

Then we are at risk of having the type of problem where, no, we cannot say anything bad about Norwegian house building, because we want Norwegian constructors and architects to have jobs, right? ... We want that freedom, to be able to say, no, many things are good about Norwegian architecture, and we exhibit this and that and that... But also, here, very few projects are exhibited, and that is for a reason. It's because they weren't good enough. We need that freedom. Right. And then we cannot enter a cooperation where some people think that we have to remove some parts because they don't fit into their profile, selling Norwegian architects. See?

However, it sometimes seems that the most important thing is that someone *outside* the arts does not get to take the decision, regardless of its content. This claim is supported by the fact that even if most factors within the Norwegian foreign cultural policy discourse have stayed unchanged from 1997 to today, the conflict level is much lower now. What has happened? Two factors that have changed regard power being moved from the MFA to the art world, including the competence to assess and decide the official Norwegian international art and artist profile, and an increased focus on the MFA's cultural policy responsibility. According to Mangset, these two resemble the two most important conflict lines of the pre-2003 administration model, which were claims of a lack of competence in art valuations (diplomats picked and chose what they thought

were right) and looming claims of instrumentalism. Clearly, instrumental ambitions and strategies have not vanished from foreign cultural affairs; however, the art field now seems to feel that they are in control. They get to decide, not in terms of whether these affairs are still instrumental, but in what ways or to what degrees.

One clear implication of the claim for authenticity and professionalism is that the MFA's work and staff also have to be professional. In Chapter 5, the trend that an increasing number of staffers working with cultural affairs at the Foreign Service missions are locally employed, often with a background in the arts, is discussed. This will also be further discussed in Chapter 9. Still, it is interesting to see how the "do it properly" value is also integrated into the Foreign Service, yet another signal about how integrated the fields of art and Foreign Service have now become. One informant from the Consulate General in New York rhetorically ponders on how other, smaller missions work with art and culture:

I just have the impression that the work effort in terms of culture and arts is smaller there, and that the work mode thus becomes different, that things are mixed, in a way. That focus is on the cliché of Norwegianness... I guess. Like May 17 and waffles and... that it is more about coziness, that perspective.

Again, the view is that the cultural and artwork are polluted if not operated by professionals, that it becomes a cliché, coziness, hybrid, everything but authentic. When asked about whether art and culture should ideally be more integrated into a general foreign policy agenda, an informant from one of the other missions asserts:

It is a bit tricky, but I think no. I think, to use culture in order to achieve political aims... perhaps it's a personal thing, and perhaps I shouldn't be saying... You know, for Norway to use a lot of resources allocated for culture in China, in order to help access for Norwegian businesses... I think it's a bad idea.

On the other hand, when the MFA does take the arts seriously, cooperation assumedly works well. An informant from the field of literature explains how she feels that her organization and the MFA are mostly very well in accordance when it comes to the central aims of their cooperation. She says:

When we cooperate with the embassies, well... we ask them. We define what we want to do, how we prioritize, and then we invite them to a cooperation on some project. That cooperation mostly implies them giving us funding for this or that seminar or visit or whatever. So it is very rare that...

They do not tell us what to do. We tell them, what we would like to do, and then it is up to them to discuss. For example, three years ago, we were very eager to approach the British market more actively, so we talked to the MFA about that, and they got involved in inviting English publishers to the Norwegian Festival of Literature in Lillehammer. So we try to get them into working with us, and they do, if it is a match between what we believe is the right thing to do and what they think is the right thing to do, right...

When asked about the MFA using art as an instrument to promote Norway, e.g. as a tourist nation, the informant answers:

**I:** No... You know what, I have heard about it. However, I never experience that myself. I never experienced that a Foreign Service mission asked us to do something, only to use it for something other than intended. So, no, that is not my impression.

**R:** What do you mean with the phrase "other than intended?"

**I:** Well, I do understand that they have to be concerned about Norway's reputation. That is much more important to them than to us. We think about Norwegian literature's reputation, not Norway as a nation. That is one of those side things, but not the most important. However, they do interrelate, because if Norwegian literature does well abroad, I am aware of course that that is important for Norway's reputation. So, it affects our work. Still, literature is what we do, not... Not tourism, right? Or, we would not have liked that they asked us to do something because they needed a better negotiation climate with President Putin!

According to this informant, who represents a very typical view, two things seem clear: First, the agents of the art field are not passive clients of the MFA, waiting to engage in projects where the ministry or Foreign Service tell them how to operate in order to release instrumental objectives or effects. Rather, and more in line with what Nisbett (2012) reports from the UK (cf. Chapter 2.2), the arts organization seem confident in taking the opportunities that a potential project cooperation with the MFA and the Foreign Service represent, in terms of yielding profits that the organizations see as favorable. Second, the MFA seems to be very aware of the potential tension that lies in an eventual instrumental strategy that involves the art organizations, moreover, that such strategies should be avoided, at least in their most direct forms. It is also interesting to hear the informant say that she has not experienced explicitly instrumental uses of art, but only heard of it. The fact that the question about who is benefiting from whom is not very clear, at the same time as any explicit problems related to instrumentalism are carefully toned down (they exist, we have heard about them, but have never seen them ourselves...), implies that this is an area that has moved from tension and dispute to pragmatic negotiations. Such negotiations will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 9. However, the underlying premise to this cooperation is very clear: The art field will supposedly not allow overly instrumental strategies to take place, at least not if they are

carried out in any explicit forms. Likewise, the Foreign Service staff has to adhere to central (governmentally implemented) policies, and not to art world needs and desires, in cases of disagreements over crucial issues. As a top diplomat at one of the Foreign Service missions told me very gravely, in a situation of conflicting interests between the MFA and the arts field, they would have to listen to the MFA, “because we are an extension of the MFA. The conflict hence lies there as a continuous potential; the best way to avoid it, is to sidestep the entire problem. As noted, I will get back to the integration issue in more detail in Chapter 9. It is interesting though to notice that the idea that art, also within a foreign policy context, should be handled by agents with professional competence, or at least a firm comprehension that such competence should be applied, is so significantly present within the MFA system. Now, however, focus changes to the arts’ representational functions as a part of the legitimization of cultural policy within a foreign policy discourse.

## 7. Legitimation of culture II: Representation

Where Chapter 6 centered on art for art's sake legitimations in foreign culture policy, the focus is now directed towards the first of two areas covering the explicitly instrumental impacts that culture is assumed to hold within this policy field, culture's representational capacity. In the following, the claim is that such capacity holds a two-way function, both producing prominent Norwegian self-images and equally prominent narratives of Norway and Norwegianness. The analysis here relates to the general interests and effects, displayed in Figure 1 in Chapter 6.1. Such interests range from specific interests in the external domain, e.g. national music or literature businesses in international markets, to external general interests like national reputation (suited, in turn, to generate political, social or economic profits like increased export, tourism, political or moral standing, etc.). National interests also involve *internal* aspects, aiming, i.a. to produce stable and competitive national cultural identities and self-images, both on specific and general levels. Specific, as cultural producers and institutions are produced to be competitive in international arenas, and general, as nations are reminded and instructed of collective qualities (Bátora 2005, Henrikson 2005, Leira, Borchgrevink et al. 2007, Berridge 2010, Singh 2010, Minnaert 2012, Ang, Isar et al. 2015, etc.)

Most prominently, the focus is on how culture is instrumental in an ongoing construction work, producing narratives that reflect Norway and Norwegianness in desirable ways, both internally and internationally, both of which are crucially important ambitions within foreign policy. This production of a "Norwegian brand" is analyzed in light of the theories on discursive production, more specifically in light of Löfgren's concept of Swedishness (Norwegianness, in this case) and Homi K. Bhabha's concept of nation narration (1990). It is specifically seen in relation to how different forms of structural power discursively set the agenda for how it is seen as rational to think and act within the discourse of international cultural relations (Milliken 1999, Lähdesmäki 2011). It is also argued that, even though the character of- and political argument for such an effort



is currently changing, such effects largely legitimate the state engagement in foreign cultural policy.

As the primary aim of this thesis is to look for reflections of the arts' developmental agency in a foreign cultural policy context, in the following the focus will be centered on such broad or general effects from international art and cultural promotion, especially the one that goes on as part of Norwegian foreign (cultural) policies. In particular, this refers to the *idea that the arts have the capacity for improving Norway's international reputation, both broadly and narrowly*. This idea is intriguing for several reasons. First, because the arts are entrusted with such a grand capacity; furthermore, because it implies that Norwegian arts has something that is identifiable as specifically Norwegian (if not, how would it improve Norway's reputation?), and that this is something it is possible to agree upon collectively. Finally, it is interesting as this primarily external effect has an *internal* equivalent, in the way that Norwegian images abroad intimately affect Norwegian self-images, and hence domestic identity construction.

## 7.1 Norwegianness

In the article, *The Nationalization of Culture: Constructing Swedishness*, the Swedish anthropologist Orvar Löfgren (1991) argues that even though often disregarded, national identities are dynamic processes of construction and reproduction over time. Stressing this constructivist aspect, an important implication is that the identities are not natural, but rather naturalized sizes, what Benedict Anderson (1991) frames with his notion of imagined communities. Consequently, national identities are specific forms of collective identities, holding both latent and manifest forms, activated in some settings and dormant in others. An important point for Löfgren, moreover, is that national identities are produced in relation to the other. This, of course, resembles the idea discussed in the theory chapter, namely that meaning is produced in relation to its constituting outside (Hall and Du Gay 1996, Foucault 2002). According to Leira, Borchgrevink et al. (2007), just because of its function as a mediator between internal and external relations, foreign policy has an important role in the construction of

national identity. They argue that foreign policy has a dual object; to connect us to foreign domains, emphasizing the community between *them and us*, and at the same time to point out what is unique about us, what differentiates us from being the same as the other. The idea about how we appear to others thus has an inside, and they conclude that in both these cases it makes sense to speak of foreign policy as identity policy. Others' view of just us reflexively affects how we consider and see ourselves, something that in turn molds us as a nation. Through foreign policy discourse images of both the other and ourselves are produced, both for internal and external audiences, and through practice these images are reproduced or tested, strengthened or weakened. Hence, they argue that foreign policy may be regarded as a continuous nation building (ibid.), in which the constituting outside influences insiders with a sense of national comfort, understanding and self-reflexive, ontological security (Subotic and Zarakol 2013).

The arts and culture have had a continuous position as a constitutive component of a nation's face outwards (Mitchell 1986); something that potentially has the capacity to reflect central selected parts of national identity and to hold and indite collective ambitions and conceptions about who "we" are or, equally important, who we collectively want "to be." Shortly after taking on the job as Minister of Culture in the new conservative Solberg government in 2013, Thorhild Widvey highlighted this representational role of the arts, claiming that:

Culture brings about collectiveness. It deals with who we are, who we want to be, what kind of society we want. More than that: The entire field of culture, in the most profound sense, relates to freedom of speech – how we view reality, with what eyes we see the world around us (Widvey 2013).

*We* in this context are, of course, Norway and Norwegians, a notion considerably more complex and inconclusive than it appears at first sight. The relationship between culture, identity and nation is therefore one of intimacy.

The idea that the arts and culture have such constituting and representative functions presupposes a perceived link between culture in an anthropological sense and in the

sense artistic expression. Löfgren (1991) describes this link as a sort of “cultural grammar,” in which cultural expressions both represent and constitute identity:

First of all there exists what we could call an international cultural grammar of nationhood, with a thesaurus of general ideas about the cultural ingredients needed to form a nation [...] This includes a symbolic estate (flag, anthem, national landscape, sacred texts, etc.), ideas about national heritage (a national history and literature, a national folk culture, etc.), as well as notions of national character, values and tastes. This international grammar may also contain specific ideas about the institutional framework. [...] The international thesaurus is transformed into a specific national lexicon, local forms of cultural expressions, which tend to vary from nation to nation. In this field, we can observe how national rhetoric and symbols may be located in different arenas, emphasized in different historical periods or social situations. (Löfgren 1991: 114)

As Singh (2010: 1) asserts, “[c]ulture as everyday group life is an anthropological concept. Nevertheless, it is reflected in the creative and aesthetic expressions regulating, sustaining, or at times, contesting the shared understandings of the meanings of cultures.” National identity is consequently defined dynamically in the interplay between the two, and both culture in an anthropological sense (national cultural repertoires) and culture in the narrow sense of artistic expressions that contribute to such continuously ongoing definition processes. Hence, one of cultural policy’s most important roles was (and is) to promote national unity and identity. In referring to central policy documents, Nilsen (2011) argues that since its start, one of the main purposes of cultural policy was to regulate the relationship between the nation and its culture, in particular in terms of establishing and maintaining a national identity (Ministry of Kulturdepartementet 2003 [White paper report no. 48]).

The production of new or revised images of Norway has been an important part of the foreign cultural practice for a long time, but was intensified as a result of the economic growth that came with the big oil and natural gas explorations during the 1970s, which seemed to also prepare for a greater national self-esteem. According to Lending (2000), the idea during this first period was to adjust the difference between how Norwegians were viewed externally and the new image that emerged internally. Lending claims that such adjustments were both legitimate and necessary, related to a number of aspects of Norwegian society, including art and culture, and aimed at reflecting the new reality in a more precise way.

In her analysis, Lending points towards an interesting aspect, the fact that not all welcome the idea of strategically producing a uniform national image more or less as a brand. Firstly, she refers to the argument that such an image or national identity potentially reflects a homogeneity that is non-existent, not accounting for the fact that a nation consists of many “identities.” Furthermore, the fact that even though a coherent image has its advantages in many situations where nation *branding* is the target, the risk is that an overly sleek and streamlined narration is produced. The argument against such concerns, she asserts, is that a revision by no means has to mean that former images are replaced with new static ones; the aim, instead, has to produce multi-faceted and complex images of the modern Norway (ibid.). She concludes her argument by stressing that the greatest challenge following the renegotiation of national image(s) is, rather than making them, to find some kind of a consensus about values and qualities that in future presentations should be their core. A point she emphasizes is that any attempt to produce coherent images of the nation indeed implies selections, something that almost certainly in turn holds the risk of revealing conflicts over what Norwegianness is or should be. Perhaps a little naïvely, she therefore calls on attempts to produce and present “nuanced and realistic” images that at the same time accentuate the qualities unique for Norway today, as if nuanced and realistic were neutral notions describing social and cultural meaning.

## **7.2 Self-images and the production of a “we”**

In an article on Norwegian self-images, Leira, Borchgrevink et al. (2007) identify a number of narrations that have had a continuous place, both within Norwegian foreign policy and, since the two are closely linked, our national self-conception. Prominent national self-images are related, i.a. to: a) being small (however, not as small as its mere population should indicate), b) Being an outsider (because we are a young nation, situated far north, and because we are not part of the EU), c) Being generous (in sharing our oil-induced wealth with the poor), and d) being a peace nation (negotiating peace in places like Palestine, South Sudan, Colombia and Sri Lanka). Particularly interesting is the narrative that Norway’s ideals and interests coincide, so that by merely following

“our” own interests, we benefit the greater international good (ibid.). The analysis emphasizes how different images are contradictory, balancing the need for being, while at the same time being powerful in marketing and flexible in modern nation building. These different images in sum constitute an overarching sense of national identity, in Löfgren’s terminology, *Norwegianness*. National images are produced discursively. Different image claims are articulated, of which some gain constituting positions. Hence, such images do not appear tautologically; they are negotiated as part of a strategical action conducted by interests with defining powers towards or within a field. Because such discursive construction work has been carried out over time, a specific core has materialized. This is a national characteristic that with Swidler (1986) or Lamont and Thévenot (2000) could be described as collective repertoires, notions about collectiveness that tend to become self-fulfilling (cf. Merton 1948).

In the following, I will argue that a central part of this Norwegianness, important both to face the world and to create internal self-esteem and unity, relates to a prominent/overarching self-image of being a *culture nation*,<sup>54</sup> resembling images of European culture nations with whom we like and hope to be compared (see e.g. Neumann 2002, Pyykkönen 2012). And, as the promotion of Norwegianness has become more than just a play for co-existing peacefully with other nations, but rather a strategy to sell both national ideas and products, this image and several others that may be derived from it are discussed in relation to the concept of *nation branding*.

The use of culture in order to make an impact on Norway’s global reputation departs from historic grounds. In the post-war years, there was a continuous feeling that Norway was an underdog that needed to start showing itself as a culture nation not below its peers (Lending 2000, Angell and Mordhorst 2014). Foreign affairs and constitution

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<sup>54</sup> In the case of Norway, the concept of the culture nation should also be seen in relation to a competing narrative of Norway as a nature nation, where national identity and living conditions are highly determined by the country’s nature and natural resources, see Neumann (2002).

committee leader Finn Moe's<sup>55</sup> comment, in the Parliament's treatment of the 1955-56 Budget proposition<sup>56</sup> in the case of funding for the Norwegian chamber of commerce in New York, is illustrative:

I think, based on the recent finance debate, which so strongly emphasized the significance of our foreign economy, our export and the tourist industry ... it is appropriate to underline the significant importance of being able to show our face abroad. When I think about that just these days, Denmark is inaugurating their Danish house on the Champs-Elysées – it lies there almost right across the Swedish house on this Paris' main boulevard – it is bitter to know that Norway has none. Well, let that be as of Paris, but one very often gets the impression that we have none, when it comes to showing our face abroad. (Stortingstidende 1955: 1027-29)<sup>57</sup>

Historian Svein Ivar Angell (2014) maintains that the establishment of the Office for Foreign Cultural Contact within the MFA in 1950 was closely connected with a general feeling that foreigners regarded Norway as old-fashioned and national-romantic, or that they lacked or had a biased knowledge about the nation. Promoting Norway – or in Moe's words, to show our face abroad, a metaphor that points at the face as something distinctive, characteristic and recognizable representing a full body – hence became a central strategy of identity production. Norway was in need of understanding how we were viewed from the outside, and not least to adjust that view (ibid.).

Often, the MFA was the one that first got in touch with- and reported on such perceptions. It therefore comes as no surprise that the idea that nations compete for reputation and attention in a global market was soon reflected in the Norwegian foreign cultural policy discourse. White paper report no. 15 from 2009, on the foreign policy for a new and globalized world, states:

The communication revolution has highlighted the global competition for ideas and social models, and the strategic importance of making one's values and views heard and of exploiting new opportunities to set the agenda for states and other actors. Promoting a clear and positive image of Norway abroad is important for safeguarding Norwegian interests in a number of fields. ... Public diplomacy, reputation-building and cultural cooperation are becoming increasingly important, not just in terms of marketing Norway, Norwegian culture and Norwegian products, but also as a means

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<sup>55</sup> Committee leader Moe represented the social democratic labor party.

<sup>56</sup> The proposition was presented by the then sitting labor social democratic Gerhardsen government.

<sup>57</sup> Quote translated to from Norwegian to English by the author of the thesis.

of promoting Norwegian interests in their full breadth. (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2009:81)

More recently, reports and so-called *Nation brand indexes* based on international surveys and prepared by market analysts and consultancy firms have regularly supplemented such reports, giving “market evaluations” about different nations’, among them Norway’s, international reputation. In many ways, *Improving Norway’s Reputation* from 2009 is an illustrative example of such a market evaluation. It pictures Norway as a country few people relate to, with few internationally renowned notabilities, and as a passive, well-organized country where nothing really happens (Nissen 2012). But the consultants also concludes that “Norwegian contemporary culture is important in order to create a picture of a modern and sophisticated nation” (Thorkildsen and Kavli 2009: 52), thus leaving an impression that the alleged image problem can and will be renovated with the use of the arts and culture.

According to a survey carried out by Leira and Sverdrup (2015: 13) among Norwegian diplomats, to “increase the understanding of- and support for the Norwegian social model and political system” was considered the most important aim of the Foreign Service missions’ work with Norway’s reputation. According to the same survey, “to internationalize Norwegian cultural life” was not considered equally important, but still “fairly important” (ibid.). To what degree the two (more or less consciously) are seen in correlation was not part of the scope of the survey. Based on empirical material of this study, however, this is in my opinion a highly relevant and logical inference. The belief that presenting a strong, vital, innovative Norwegian arts sector will matter in how Norway is viewed globally, and thus that the arts are particularly well-suited to promote general Norwegian foreign interests, is found throughout the empirical data, both in interviews and practice observations. Consequently, the overall impression is that it is quite clear that the government’s overarching aim, running parallel to an increased globalization, has been to increase Norwegian economic and political influence globally, responding to an increased worldwide competition for such influence. Three informants, all working at Foreign Service missions in France, London and New York, typically assert that:

A strong international Norwegian cultural life is good for Norway's reputation, I think. And, artists, authors... Norwegian artists and Norwegian authors, Norwegian musicians doing well abroad, are good for a general Norwegian reputation, really.

The arts contribute to strengthening a positive image of Norway. As a modern, knowledgeable... and that we have a cultural life on a high level.

[The promotion of the arts] strengthens a favorable picture of Norway as a modern, well-informed nation with culture on a high level.

Another informant working as locally employed staff at one of the missions reflects on this:

I think the MFA, especially from the end of the 90s, and up until now, realized that it was important to concentrate on culture as... soft power. That it is a good opportunity for people getting to know the country, that they want to go there, and that it becomes a tourist target for a great many.

When asked about how the foreign missions facilitate for different Norwegian interests, a senior diplomat explains that while his main aim was always to work for the Norwegian art sector per se, nevertheless,

...if one widens the perspective even further, I believe that this may produce a long-term reputation and image effect beyond the cultural sector, that is interesting for Norwegian interests in a wider sense. That is foreign policy. That it is of Norwegian interest to show Norway as an interesting actor: diverse, open, complex. As a modern society. ... the fact that Norway is a player, with whom they can identify with in some way or another.

The argument, causally connecting success abroad with internal qualities or characteristics, explains why it is viewed as so important to promote positive values in the form of national narratives. Today, it is especially important to signal that we are a modern and multicultural culture nation, combining historic (authentic) values with cutting-edge innovation. Another senior diplomat specifically pointed out modern architecture as a great instrument to project modern Norwegian values and qualities, adjusting old-fashioned, simplistic pictures of Norway. In the diplomat's eyes, the new "barcode" skyline of Oslo, with its new or planned signal cultural buildings like the new opera house in Bjørvika, the Munch Museum, the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, etc., is more than anything suited to display:

...that we are not just a tiny corner of the world. That we are part of a broader discourse, part of the rest of the cultural world. In a way that is important to articulate, because we want to display the diversity of Norway too, the fact that we are moving. That we are not stuck in old prejudices about Norway, images of Norway as... somewhat simple or ignorant. That the way we focus when we want tourists to come to Norway... the beautiful, wonderful nature and everything, and that is good in a



way, but we need to supplement it. I think it is very important to point that out ... we have so much more to offer.

The surplus that this informant talks about is art and culture, in this case, specifically architecture (flagship buildings like the Oslo opera house or the new Munch museum), which come as a welcome addition to traditional and (evidently) simplistic images of pure nature or rural landscapes.

An interesting dimension to this argument is that the arts expression is viewed as not only aesthetically interesting (in fact the planned new Munch museum is drawn by a Spanish architecture company, and could hence just as well be held as a representation of a non-Norwegian aesthetic) but as a representation of a national will to be cultural. “It is we, the Norwegians, who wanted these buildings. We gave them priority. We finance them, and we, of course, will fill them with content in time to come,” the informant says. Hence, these architectonic pearls reflect the intention behind them, namely the intention to produce and maintain cultural buildings of high quality. The rationale behind this is obviously that prioritizing such houses will bear fruits in terms of producing a Norway brand as a cultural nation, interesting to tourists, artists, foreign politicians or investors for that matter. The culture nation argument holds that the arts have the capacity to signal or reflect certain characteristics about us as a nation. Hence, promoting arts is viewed to have an effect on two levels simultaneously: on a Norwegian arts discourse, interesting to the arts sector, setting a footprint on a global scene, and as a promotion of a general Norwegian reputation. Most informants tend to emphasize the former, downscaling the latter. Generally speaking, artistic ends are accentuated over general foreign policy aims, often leaving the impression that such indirect effects are not that important, which they obviously are.

Nonetheless, an interesting question is not whether these types of image articulations are just as constitutive for our own self-conception as they are towards outsiders. And, consequently, that they are, as Löfgren (1991) asserts, insiders’ stories for other insiders, claiming to capture the spirit or essence of Norwegianness. Again, this revisits the argument that there is an important interdependency between external and internal

purposes with displaying cultural objects internationally. We mirror ourselves in how we are viewed from the outside, something that also tends to qualify certain aesthetic practices at home. The above-mentioned opera house in Oslo, designed by Snøhetta, was at first considered controversial in Norway (Røyseng 2000). However, this signal building was soon to be regarded as a huge success, after receiving an almost unanimous acclamation abroad, illustrating how a cultural object is (re)negotiated discursively. From being viewed as an object exclusively associated with an internal cultural policy discourse, denoting a cultural policy cost/value ratio, highbrow versus popular culture or cultural heritage fights, etc., it was now seen from a different perspective. This time, highlighting questions of whether or not Norway was to follow up the culture nation obligations it was awarded as part of the opera house's success in promoting Norway. The same international success assumedly has also contributed largely to the internal success of the house, seeing millions of spectators every year contributing to the discursive articulation by internalizing in mind and body the device that this house has magical capacities. Capacities far beyond trivial debates on high culture dominance within cultural policies, or whether the building received funding that should rather have been spent in social welfare policy areas.

### **7.3 Nation branding**

Above, foreign cultural policy is seen in terms of national identity construction, both as a means of reflecting a favorable image of Norway as an interesting and authentic culture nation, and as a means of reviewing ourselves self-reflexively through the eye of the other. Even though important aspects of foreign cultural policy could be seen in terms of internal effects, the most explicitly pronounced aspects lie in an external promotion of Norwegian interests. Where questions of national identity belong to a discourse on collective symbolic values like unity, stability, self-esteem, integrity and morals, nation branding clearly enters one of more tangible economic values, more specifically one of international marketing and sales (Van Ham 2002, Beisvåg 2014). And, where the direct forms of such marketing relate to a discourse of international art export and creative industries, this marketing denotes a more indirect form, in which the arts

and culture are seen as capable of contributing to sales in more general forms. In this section, the analytical focus is on how the arts are thought to have such a general marketing capacity. In particular, it attends to how the arts and culture are believed to represent collective narrations that “tell” and “sell” national ideas, values and products, what goes by the notion of *nation branding*.

In a thesis on the rhetoric of nation branding, Beisvåg (2014) asserts that in a world where state boundaries are increasingly being dissolved, the competition among nations in an international market is growing tighter and tighter. This competition is about tourists, talent and about the export of goods and investments, and according to Beisvåg, nations have to keep distinct profiles in order to distinguish themselves, a situation in which the concept of nation branding has evolved. The theory relates to the device that nations have to build a competitive identity in order to compete successfully on the global stage. Within the Norwegian context, over the past years, the MFA has worked actively with building Norway’s reputation abroad (ibid.).

In the article, *Exporting national culture*, Paschalidis (2009: 281) argues that, “[p]rojecting national culture abroad is essentially about performing the nation, converting the nation into a performance, and thus, ironically, disclosing its fundamental truth as a cultural construct, as an elaborate artwork.” According to Paschalidis, foreign cultural policy is more of a strategic construction of a brand in the form of a staged performance, than a neutral display of a collective culture. Here, he is supported by another cultural policy researcher, Louis Belanger (1999), who claims that international cultural cooperation within a globalized context has moved from objects of display, which in reverse brought back impulses, to a much more ambiguous object of complex multilateral communication.

Another researcher who has also spent much time studying international arts cooperation and cultural relations, Melissa Nisbett claims that there has been a recent shift towards a more market-based branding thinking within this field (2016). Should we choose to believe Peter Van Ham (2002: 249), who has studied “the intersection

between the two worlds of PR and IR theory,” this tendency has not come in a vacuum. He claims that “[t]he practice of ‘branding’ has invaded all aspects of public and private life. Increasingly, cities, regions and states are using the services of PR and branding consultants to strengthen their ties with so-called stakeholders, aiming to achieve economic and political benefits.” Strategies where the arts and culture are used in order to promote favorable specific and general images of Norway, or to adjust unfortunate or simplistic ones, hence in many ways point towards an explicit marketing and PR discourse. One of the informants, a senior leader within design and architecture, sees this tendency clearly. While being interviewed, he simultaneously looks up the MFA’s aim to “promote a positive image of Norway internationally” online, and responds: “A positive image of Norway internationally, that is marketing, nothing else. And, why marketing, why do you want a positive image? Well, that is because you want people to smile when they are thinking about you, right?”

### 7.3.1 The (inversed) country-of-origin effect

Within marketing and PR, the belief that non-governmental actors can improve the general reputation is referred to as an *inverse country-of-origin effect*. According to White (2012: 111), the country-of-origin effect “refers to how national reputation influences perceptions of products (that is, German engineering; Italian design).” The idea is that general notions on countries are capable of forming general impressions of product characteristics, so that, to use White’s example, consumers take all German products to be solid or all Italian designs to be cutting-edge (perhaps despite personal likes and dislikes). As pointed out by Wang (2006), such positive images are of course important economic and political capital. However, this effect also has an inverted form, as specific products are thought to hold the capacity of forming (or even reforming) general perceptions about its country-of-origin (White 2012). In her study, she concludes that:

In the inverse COO relationship found in the current study, a product that is evaluated highly can help the image of the country. The study found that for smaller, less-known countries (Austria and Estonia), beliefs about a brand led to beliefs about the country's innovation and overall image. (ibid.: 117)

Moreover:

[...] corporations that are willing to purposefully associate their international brands with their country of origin could enhance the image of their country, and thus play a role as non-state actors in the process of public diplomacy. Businesses have resources and expertise, as well as a global worldview, that is advantageous to public diplomacy, and building favorable country-to-country relationships in the global society is in the self-interests of business, as well as governments. (ibid.: 117)

The arts field and artists possess many of the same qualities and characteristics as the corporations and businesses that White points to in her study. This is the reason to thus assume that the MFA's dealings with the arts, making use of their global networks and cultural capital, has many of the same objectives as public diplomacy utilizing famous corporate brands. At the London design festival, Norwegian furniture is marketed as icons of their field. White (2012) points out that since (cultural) icons potentially are associated positively with their country of origin, they form a powerful political and economic capital. Hence, art or artists of exceptional quality are held to have some of the same magical powers that other mega-brands have.

In her article, White (2012) presupposes that an inverse country-of-origin effect is achievable only if agents holding the necessary amount of symbolic capital are willing to take part in strategies that enhance the image of their country. One diplomat in the empirical material describes such exceptional artists and artistic products, referring to them as spearheads:

Writers like Nesbø [...], Knausgård [...], they are spearheads for something more than themselves. That has to be our reason to work with single artists. Because, my job is not to help Knausgård sell more books, but to make sure that the literary field here is aware of Norway and Norwegian authors. And, I think it is the same for all arts field, right, that there are forerunners that lead attention to something broader and more general.

Artists like the pop duo Nico and Wince, who had success on the American charts in 2014, or Kygo who received much attention, especially in Norway,<sup>58</sup> for playing at the

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<sup>58</sup> Kygo's appearance in Rio evoked a frenzy in Norway, topped off with journalist Bård Ose of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK, claiming, "You can compare Kygo with what the Beatles meant for Liverpool. And, what has Elvis had to say for Memphis? Incredibly much, both to the tourist industry and music life. You can say the same thing about Kygo, Bergen and Norway." On his side, Marketing expert at the Norwegian Business School, Morten William Knudsen, claimed the effect from Kygo's success to be

closing ceremony at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, are examples from the field of [pop] music. The much-mentioned Oslo opera house is another icon or spearhead. Besides, it may also serve as an example of how internal and external art and cultural activity are structurally closely related and mutually dependent. Large signal buildings like opera houses are extremely expensive and therefore often controversial policy projects. Often, at least in smaller countries, an opera house project will be met by claims of a dubious cost/benefit-ratio. Relatively few people directly enjoy the opera shows, both due to cost issues (they are expensive despite heavy governmental subsidies) and social issues (many people do not see themselves as natural opera audiences, and informal participation barriers are plenty). Still, new opera houses are built. Why? Perhaps, because they involve citizens in national stories of cultural awareness and significance, a point also acknowledged by citizens not approving of opera or even including it in their own value chain of what is culturally significant. How the rest of the world sees us collectively matters to us. Because opera is viewed as a more or less global value of refined taste and cultural conciseness, it makes sense to build opera houses, even if they are expensive by virtue of how many spectators they entertain. This is of course also the reason these buildings are often so extravagant; they are national symbol buildings, cultural flagships. This way, how we experience being observed externally directly influences on how we act internally. Of course, this argument not only restricts itself to the building of opera houses, as all internal cultural policy contains a component of how we are viewed as a cultural nation.

### 7.3.2 Narratives and narration

The starting point for this analysis is the claim that there is a link between cultural representations, e.g. art and identity, i.e. how culture in general is conceived and

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formidable: "I think Kygo means very much for Norway as a music nation. It is difficult to determine the exact amount in money, but I do not think we understand the extent of the innovation Kygo stands for." <https://www.nrk.no/hordaland/samanliknar-kygo-med-the-beatles-1.13101530> Translated from Norwegian to English the by author of thesis; retrieved 20.09.2016

negotiated. Singh (2010: 1), for example, asserts that “Representations shape and change identity. [People] find their identities—and thoughts and actions thereof—shaped and constrained by such representations. The symbiotic relationship between changes in identity and the circulation of creative representations seems obvious here.” Homi K. Bhabha (1990) argues that nations can be understood in terms of narratives. Such narratives will be sets of mutually contradictory, and thus ambivalent, pronunciations and readings of national images. The theory is plausible, as it stresses both how narratives are easy to simplify *and* at the same time are flexible in the way that they can tell alternative stories, representing the complexity and multiplicity of a modern nation. Bhabha, a professor in literature, is especially interested in narrations in the form of texts. However, as Melanie Schiller (2014) argues, a broad range of artistic practices and expressions potentially function as such narratives in the construction of national identity. In the article “Fun Fun Fun on the Autobahn”: Kraftwerk Challenging Germanness, Schiller argues that the German rock band Kraftwerk through its most renowned songs, “rhetorically reclaim authority for what it means to be German.” She sustains this bold claim, writing:

By sonically, visually and linguistically touching upon issues of collective memory and the confines of national space, time, and identification, Kraftwerk effectively not only introduce the key questions of nation building as a plurivalent discourse and participate in a performative construction of a national narrative, but simultaneously also challenge the notion of a monolithic Germanness. (ibid.: 618)

Schillers point is therefore that art – in this case, rock – in some way has the capacity to articulate national identity. Central to her work is the premise that fixed images on national identity exist, one that the arts has the power to not only “challenge notions of a fixed and definitive national identity,” but to rearticulate such notions (ibid.: 619). She builds this argument on the above-mentioned Bhabha’s notion of nation as narration. She specifically emphasizes the narration concept in terms of nations’ mythological character, particularly focusing on the productive conflict between different conceptualizations – narrations – of nations in time and space, i.e. between historic and future, between different internally, and between internal and external images of the nation (Bhabha 1990, Schiller 2014). Bhabha hence stresses that modern societies are characterized by ambivalence in terms of how to articulate typicality or unity (ibid.). This

idea supports and relates to Lähdesmäki's findings about the narration (construction is the term she uses) of a joint European identity, in which heterogeneity and diversity are discursively renegotiated and rearticulated, and thus rhetorically transformed, to unity and homogeneity (2011).

In a speech at the Norwegian National Museum of Art in 2012,<sup>59</sup> former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Espen Barth Eide stated:

Culture is international; culture is a part of a modern foreign policy, directly or indirectly. The arts build bridges between states, nations and people, at different levels, between different times, between consciousness and the subconscious. [...] The arts tell stories, our stories, other nations' stories of themselves – and of us, of where we come from. We are seen from abroad, Norway is seen from “the outside.” (Eide 2012)

Just like former culture minister Widvey above, here Eide articulates the arts' ability to convey specific narrations about Norwegianness. As stressed in the theory chapter, and grounded in a constructivist-oriented discourse study approach to this material, narrations of national peculiarities should be seen as social constructions. It does not mean, however, that they appear as less real or relevant to the ones on whom they work. Rather than being essentially true, such constructions therefore tend to *become* “true,” as they are rearticulated often enough to the point where they appear as self-evident. Even critical voices will have to relate to them, since they are basic premises for social discourse and action.

In the empirical material, several such narratives are to be found. Perhaps the most important one is described above, with the notion of Norway as a culture nation. That narrative is important, as it contains so many external and internal implications. The amount of discursive work that is put into maintaining it is therefore large. In addition to this, a number of other important, favorable narratives about Norwegianness are found. As also previously discussed (cf. Chapter 3), at the presentation of White paper

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/the-opening-of-the-exhibition-emil-nolde/id705155/>  
Retrieved 15.03.2014



report no. 19, in Oslo in 2013, sitting Foreign Minister Barth Eide stated that Norway had developed into a pronounced global player, especially when accounted for by its population. He argued for this notion by referring to the importance of Norwegian development aid, the success of certain technology exports, the promotional value of the Nordic political model, and finally the success of Norwegian art and artists like Munch and Melgaard. As a result, the image of Norway that Barth Eide produced was one of an innovative and successful cultural nation punching above its weight. Some would argue of course that it is the foreign minister's job to make such claims, making there little to take notice of. However, keeping Neumann's claim that the diplomacy is thoroughly consensus-oriented; particularly when it comes to keeping public speeches (2011) in mind, it could also be argued that it actually does represent the MFA in general.

Values that directly touch on different forms of quality, for example that a highly quality-oriented art life somehow reflects a more general quality orientation, a social system that efficiently arranges for quality production, or (more specifically) an interesting art scene, are all central to the narration of Norwegianness. This quality thinking also holds a very direct form. Because the arts are seen as being capable of reflecting general interests, it is also so that the better the art is assessed to be, the better it is considered to release such general effects. Consequently, any shift of direction away from general art cooperation and exchange, and towards competitive sites where national interests are allowed to be linked to highly prestigious social and physical spaces, has a strong element of such a rationale. Narrations that aim to establish propitious images of Norway are thus better off at the Venice Biennale than a smaller and less influential showcase. As Nisbett says, this rationale has several flaws (2016). It is not a given that a national presence at a biennale, however prestigious, has the capacity to reach the opinion makers as intended, since such transitions of images pass through a number of stages and media outside the control of the authorities that hoped for the branding effects. Or, more concretely, how could you know that the audience at a certain concert can in any way be linked to political levels in the country hosting the cultural event where Norwegian musicians have played. In such terms, the effect from nation narration

should be considered uncertain, as the causal relations are also/equally uncertain. As with other instrumental effects from the arts, marketing effects as addressed above are at best hypothetical.

In her research on U.S. international cultural relations, Margaret Wyszomirski argues that foreign cultural policy work “can be and is conducted for a variety of reasons.” “Diplomatic – long-term soft power goals of convincing the leaders and/or publics of other nations of the appeal of American values and building a positive context in which other nations respond to American policies” are important examples. Among her empirical findings are a set of values that are repeatedly presented as typically American over a broad spectrum of artistic expressions, such as music, film and literature (2016). In particular, she finds that this art relates in different ways to values like *equality*, *modernity and traditions* and *democracy* (ibid.). These are important values also found within the narration of Norwegianness. In an interview with a representative of the Norwegian gaming industry (producing computer games and applications) in May 2015, the representative argued that much of the reason for Norway's success in the field of smartphone apps is that Norway as a nation is perceived as secure, stable and quality-oriented. These are values and not only preconditions for product innovation. They are values that are encultured into the actual output expressed by the products, hence reflecting a link between preconditions that are socially coded and the values that such products mediate. This and other similar aspects have consequently become part of the MFA's agenda, as they produce narratives that brand both the products and national models necessary to produce those very products.

### 7.3.3 100% Norway

As previously described, an important part of branding strategies – or nation narration – is to be able to create a link between art and artists with a high symbolic value and their country of origin, thus in Norway to relate artists to Norwegianness. A highly relevant and illustrative example of an attempt to link the nation-state to aesthetic practice is the annual Norwegian design showcase at the London Design Festival, *100%*

Norway (Illustration 2). The concept is heavily indebted to the largest and most prestigious design trade event in the UK, *100% Design*, though with the noticeable difference that it explicitly links with a country, and not an art form or industry.



Illustration 2: From the 2011, 100% Norway Exhibition Stand at London Design Festival

Taken literally, it claims that all products displayed at the exhibition come from Norway. If one adds a symbolic reading, however, which I think is reasonable to do, it suggests that the furniture showcased here fully resembles Norwegian qualities and typicalities. They are a 100% transformation of Norwegianness, aesthetically, functionally, socially, in terms of materials used, etc. Understood this way, these products could not have come from any other place on earth than Norway, nor could the quality standard they represent. Except for the fact that they of course could, this is rhetoric and not facts. Another way to see the 100% Norway example is to see it as a discursive articulation, or in other words the above-discussed branding strategy of country-of-origin and inverted country-of-origin effect.

Here, it takes on a form where it contributes to produce a narration of Norway as particularly stylish (light constructions as opposed to massive and heavy), natural (light, natural colors, less producer intervention displaying natural qualities in materials) and innovative.

The following review in the British design magazine, *Despoko*, may serve as an example of how it was perceived:

The work in the collection ranges from modern twists on traditional themes to unique contemporary objects. All of the products are bound by their sustainable and innovative qualities. An expressive use of colour, fine craftsmanship and attention to detail are all qualities typical of Norwegian design, strongly evident in this year's 100% Norway collection.

So, what is the secret to Norway's growing design success, the magazine asks next, letting the exhibition curator Henrietta Thompson answer the question:

Well-made beautiful and functional products and furniture are an integral part of daily life in Scandinavia. Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway have all developed a reputation for making products and furniture that provide elegance and timeless simplicity, while at the same time keeping an eye on the environment.<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, the discursive production of artifacts as particularly Norwegian makes use of an interesting religious-charismatic metaphor, namely that of *icons*. In the 2015 edition of 100% Norway at the London Design Festival, the Norwegian team cooperated with *Norwegian Icons*, a project intended "to raise international awareness of Norway's significant contribution to Scandinavian mid-century modern design."<sup>61</sup> Most dictionaries and encyclopedias emphasize how every aspect of traditional religious icons holds different symbolic potentials. For example, they symbolize the link between the worldly and divine, or they display figures, e.g. angels, as messengers. In a secular reading, icons too are highly symbolic. For instance, the term *Norwegian icon*, even more than 100% Norwegian, leads us to think that this quality (derived from Norway and Norwegian design) has an almost religious effect or power of explanation. These

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.despoko.com/2011/09/24/norways-eighth-year-of-100-success/> Retrieved 15.04.2014

<sup>61</sup> [www.norwegianicons.com](http://www.norwegianicons.com)

products are messengers too, expressing narrations about quality, functionality, modernity, sustainability, etc., all of which are qualities that within a marketing discourse would constitute a high value if successfully established as common references.

Because it is important to establish a link between national, social and political institutions and ways of doing things and the art that is displayed, an important strategy is to promote the system that is a precondition to art production as much as the art produced in itself. An informant from the MFA's advisor organization within literature, for example, relates that:

We sell a lot of non-fictional literature abroad, and within this field, there is quite a large interest for Norwegian textbooks on educational science and pedagogy for instance. Our perspective on children and children's books, that we have a rich range of literature that reflects... well, equality and welfare society. So books that reflects that, be it fiction, academic literature or non-fiction, that is a quality that Norwegian literature has and it is a strength. It is something Norwegian there, in the way our society works, quite simply. Our view on childhood is central here, and it is widely reflected, down to fathers' maternity leave and all that... [...] that is something that characterizes our society and that is reflected in the literature, as a strength, right. That is something typically Norwegian. In the way our society works, plain and simple.

According to this and other informants, both children's TV and literature (non-fiction and fiction) about and for children were among the things that Norway exported most, and where we were at our very best. It could therefore be argued that the official Norwegian view on a strong protection of- and a bottom-up perspective to children's rights, has become an integrated part of the arts and a part of an alleged export success story.

One cultural object that more than any other has been seen to promote such Norwegian qualities is the opera house in Oslo, designed and brought to a successful commissioning by Snøhetta (Illustration 3). A senior representative of the architecture and design field in Norway explains that over the past 10 years, Norwegian architecture has taken a completely new international position, a position that:

...primarily is due to the opera house in Oslo. Snøhetta's opera house. And some other projects, but it probably is the opera that was the lever, that made people from all over the world very curious about Norway. It is quite fascinating that one single building can create such a buzz and interest. And, yes of course, they are interested in Snøhetta, and they are interested in Norwegian architecture in general. However, what I think the opera is a reflection of, that is specifically

Norwegian or Nordic, is how this type of prestige and luxury project can be presented through an explicitly social democratic and social profile, where you transform an extremely elitist project into something that becomes a shared value in that way.

It is worth paying attention to the informant's emphasis on how architecture here takes on the role of representing a national way of being. Even elitist, luxury objects are being transformed into something reasonable, modest, functional, and with an added social benefit in this narrative.



Illustration 3: The opera house in Oslo, designed by Snøhetta; photo: Jiri Havran

In his works on the perceived link between context-specific cultural notions and expressions, and the narration of national values, Orvar Löfgren asserts:

The common national memories and understandings are sometimes more strongly articulated in non-verbal forms, in shared smells, sounds, tastes and visions. Raymond Williams has coined the concept structure of feelings for such elusive cultural phenomena, which cannot be described in terms of ideology or worldview (Williams 1977). In this sense, some feelings are more national than others, i.e. they have a stronger symbolic charge. (1991: 109)

Löfgren's reference to Williams is interesting, since it emphasizes how national sentiments more than taking on verbal forms are visualized in images or other formats. The German researcher Melanie Schiller (2014), who argues that the German rock band Kraftwerk produces a specific Germanness, is of course one interesting example. No doubt, musical expressions are seen as capable of representing national narratives aesthetically, through lyrics and in terms of ideas about how musical quality is systematically best produced. One concrete example is how Norwegian and Nordic jazz

music through the 1970s and 80s obtained a reputation for being particularly Nordic and particularly cool, in terms of both aesthetics (with a certain low-key, cold-tempered, purity to it) and quality (it was considered to be cool, in jazz vocabulary something of a compliment). In the article, *How Jan Garbarek Came To Epitomize Nordic Jazz*, British National Public Radio music journalist Kevin Whitehead (2012) discusses both how “Garbarek is praised for his Scandinavian aesthetic,” but also the problematic aspects of such a claim. Thus, while referring to writers who “likened his saxophone howl to an icy wind blowing off a fjord,” he also argues that Garbarek’s “tenor saxophone, working from Norwegian folk material, his microtonal pitch-bends suggest the slow movements in Indian ragas” (ibid.). Equally important as to whether the Norwegian saxophone player really resembles cool, northern icy fjords or not is the fact that the narrative where nation and coolness are directly linked forms a valuable asset in branding Norway or the Nordic region. Repeated narration in the form of more or less sophisticated references to this notion should hence be seen as an active maintenance of narratives or images, that despite the fact that they could just as well be seen as depicting Indian peculiarities, do resemble something typical (however vaguely) Norwegian. One example of such a reference is the festival Nordic Cool 2013, which was arranged at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. in 2013. On the webpage of one of the co-organizers, the Norwegian Embassy in Washington D.C., the festival was presented as follows:<sup>62</sup>

What is "Nordic"? To try to answer that many-faceted question, the Kennedy Center presents **Nordic Cool 2013**. This international festival brings more than 700 artists to celebrate the diverse cultures of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and the Åland Islands.

By exploring the region's cultural diversity, the Kennedy Center aspires to offer clarity on a part of the world whose dynamic culture and creative economy have seemed elusive to many, particularly in America, and foster an appreciation of the Nordic region's heritage and emerging global influence.

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<sup>62</sup> [http://www.norway.org/News\\_and\\_events/Embassy/Nordic-Cool-2013/Nordic-Cool-2013/#.V-PKxa0pHGg](http://www.norway.org/News_and_events/Embassy/Nordic-Cool-2013/Nordic-Cool-2013/#.V-PKxa0pHGg) Retrieved 20.02.2015

Listed under (Figure 2) are “the Norwegian highlights of the Nordic Cool Festival at the Kennedy Center” (ibid.), all presumably representing both Norwegianness and coolness (cf. Beisvåg 2014).

Art form	Artist
Theater	Bird in Magic Rain with Tears
	National Theatre of Norway: Ibsen's Hedda Gabler
Music	Gaup Sisters (Sami joik)
	Terje Isungset's Icemusic
	Gjermund Larsen Trio
	Unni Løvlid (Norwegian folk singer-songwriter)
	The Hemsing Sisters (Norwegian violinists)
	Tord Gustavsen Ensemble
Film	All That Matters is Past (2012)
	The Almost Man (2012)
Dance	Carte Blanche
Cuisine	A Taste of Norway
Literature Panels	The Secret Behind the Northern Lights
	Nordic Crime: Ice, Volvos, and Murder
	Prize-Winning Literature
	From Classics to Crime-Translating Nordic Fiction for American Readers
Forums	Master Builder/Master Builders: Performing Architecture
	Artists & Audiences: Who Sees What?
Exhibitions	Snøhetta: SUPPLYWOOD or How to Be Singular in the Plural
	Nobel Prize

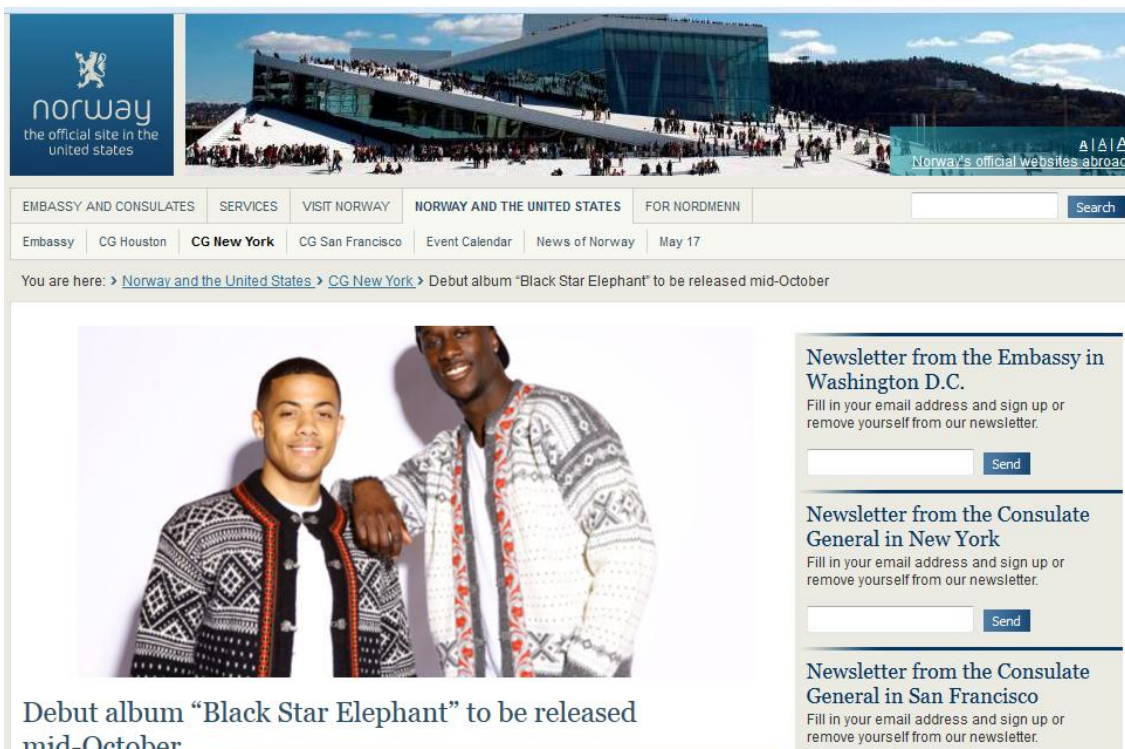
Figure 2: List of Norwegian highlights of the Nordic Cool Festival at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. in 2013; retrieved 20.02.2015

The MFA, together with cooperating partners, in- and outside of the arts, produces Norwegian icons. This production is about establishing strong brands that have the capacity of: a) branding Norwegianness in a broad sense, and b) Norwegian art (as a brand), i.e. in a narrow sense. The opera building in the Bjørvika part of Oslo is already mentioned. The Norwegian design collection with the striking name *Norwegian icons*, in cooperation with the Norwegian gallery and coffee bar *Fuglen*, is another example. The strategy of market artworks as icons is a way of enhancing the promotion effect from a brand, i.e. to go further than the traditional marketing of a brand or a product, by adding



a symbolic value. In this way, a bond is created between a product and its (in this case) country of origin.

Material objects, like the Bjørvika Opera or a chair, of course are amenable to such a production of icons, although non-material cultural expressions are also used. At my stay at the Consulate General in NY, there was a lot of buzz and talk about the Norwegian pop duo Nico and Vinz, a duo that reached high on the Billboard top 500 list at the time, and how they had appeared in traditional Norwegian knitted jerseys [*lusekofter*] and with the Norwegian flag (Illustration 4). The employees at the mission analyzed the event as a way for the Norwegian duo to differentiate themselves from the crowd within the pop world, a market where finding a “twist” is really a key issue for success. Nonetheless, this act of exoticization disguised as patriotism was still seen as valuable to Norwegian interests by the mission personnel, who aptly redistributed the pictures on social media.



The screenshot shows the official website for Norway in the United States. At the top left is the Norway logo with the text "norway the official site in the united states". The main banner features a large image of the Bjørvika Opera house with the text "Norway's official websites abroad" and "a | a | a". Below the banner is a navigation menu with categories: EMBASSY AND CONSULATES, SERVICES, VISIT NORWAY, NORWAY AND THE UNITED STATES, and FOR NORDMENN. Under "NORWAY AND THE UNITED STATES", there are links for Embassy, CG Houston, CG New York, CG San Francisco, Event Calendar, News of Norway, and May 17. A breadcrumb trail reads: "You are here: > Norway and the United States > CG New York > Debut album 'Black Star Elephant' to be released mid-October". The main content area features a photograph of the duo Nico and Vinz wearing traditional Norwegian knitted jerseys. Below the photo is the headline: "Debut album 'Black Star Elephant' to be released mid-October". To the right of the photo are three newsletter sign-up boxes: "Newsletter from the Embassy in Washington D.C.", "Newsletter from the Consulate General in New York", and "Newsletter from the Consulate General in San Francisco". Each box includes a text input field, a "Send" button, and the instruction: "Fill in your email address and sign up or remove yourself from our newsletter."



Illustration 4: The Norwegian pop duo Nico and Vince in their Norwegian knitted sweaters (over) and with the Norwegian Flag (under). From an entry on the Consulate General's web page; retrieved 17.02.2016.

In the web article posted June 10, 2014, one could, i.a. read:

Norwegian pop sensation Nico & Vinz have set the entertainment scene on fire all over the world. [...] The duo has been all around this summer with the super hit "Am I Wrong". The song has topped the charts in the UK and spent several weeks in a strong fourth place on the Billboard Hot 100 in the US. In addition, they have appeared in several of the largest American talk shows, including the Ellen show and tonight with Jimmy Fallon, and topped the iTunes sales list in over 40 countries. Nico Sereba and Vincent Dery, which is their real names, has tapped into the heart of global culture by writing and performing songs that joyfully speak of life, love and identity. The music is said to be a mix influenced by pop, reggae, West African dance, hip hop, rock and soul. Though it's hard to name their sound, many consider it a reminiscent of The Police and Paul Simon's *Graceland*. Fueled by global ambitions, they are now ready to release their debut album, *Black Star Elephant*, after supporting Bruno Mars on his national tour in July and August. Now they are ready to participate in a new tour, this time with American superstar Usher. [...] As Nico & Vinz expand their artistic reach, they admit that it's happening because of their big dreams. Says Nico, "We set such high goals because we have to. Especially coming from Norway, a country of 5 million people, it's very unusual for people to say I want to be big, as big as Michael Jackson even. We are kind of rebellious in that way of thinking. We want to show people that you can become whatever you want if you believe and work hard."

Apart from the tone of voice in the article, bursting with pride over the two Norwegian musicians' achievements, two interesting analytical points should be emphasized: First, the lack of explicating any Norwegianness to their artistic expression. In contrast to both

their Norwegian dress code and their flag statement, their music is rather compared to that of The Police and Paul Simon (on his *Graceland* album). However, the lack of Norwegianness linked to their artistic expression is compensated with the articulation of a new tendency within Norwegianness. Departing from a former conduct of not being able or willing to think big – as in wanting to become the new Michael Jackson – and held back by being from a country of only five million people, the two now resemble something new in the making. They are rebellious, leaving former Norwegian slowness for the American dream of hard work and superstar ambitions.

According to Löfgren (1991, 1993), the articulation of national typicality becomes particularly strong when linked to important ceremonies or occasions that themselves constitute national values. With reference to the British musicologist Jeremy Crump, who has analyzed how the British composer Elgar became regarded as a representative of typical Britishness, Löfgren stresses the use of ceremonial occasions. During the fieldwork in London, many of the mission staff that I spoke to emphasized the importance of the Norwegian Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square. As everybody knew that the tree would be Norwegian, this being a tradition since the war, any cultural display at this occasion would instantly be labeled Norwegian. It is therefore not strange that this event has become an important threshold for the display of art and artists seen as having a potential for displaying Norwegianness in Great Britain. Moreover, the Great Britain case is interesting in order to analyze how the dichotomy tradition – innovation is narrated within the context of Norwegian foreign cultural policy. It could thus be more than an odd coincidence that the Norwegian Embassy in London during my fieldwork time were planning the musical program of the Christmas tree ceremony for 2014, and that that program was headlined by none other than Jan Garbarek. Who could better add a shine to the Christmas ceremony than the person epitomizing Nordic cool? Assumedly, together, the Norwegian spruce and the “iconic” jazz musician constituted a powerful narration of Norwegianness.

Equally powerful as aesthetic representations of alleged national sentiments and cultural and natural peculiarities are visual arts. Paintings, photography and motion film

are all seen as having the potential to add to narrations about nations (Wyszomirski 2016). One illustrative example of this is the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, and his painting, *The Scream*. As well as this being articulated as iconic, it produces a powerful image of Norwegianness.



Illustration 5: Oslo Airport Express train, Norway, decorated with E. Munch's *The Scream*, in connection with the 150th anniversary of the painter's birth in 2013. Photo taken by the author of the thesis

Placed on the airport express trains that take travelers to and from Oslo's main airport Gardermoen, and hence greeting arriving visitors to Norway and bidding them a fond farewell (Illustration 5), the bright colors of *The Scream* are constant reminders not only about Munch originating from Norway, but also of a wider symbolic representation. As such, *The Scream* could of course be interpreted in numerous ways, but one is its resemblance with a Norwegian palette, again referring to tourist marketing of friendly phenomena like the midnight sun and northern lights. Somewhat more daring, one could imagine a link between the art icon and modern Norway with high-tech and efficient transport and communication solutions, that is, a link between cultural heritage, tradition and modernity.

An important dimension of Norwegian foreign cultural policy is the MFA's explicit obligation to work primarily with contemporary art and artists. Whereas this strategy is compatible with the narration of Norway as innovative, quality-oriented and reliable,

within settings where it is important to contribute to narrations of Norway as a cultural nation, it meets a potential dilemma. The culture nation narrative requires a certain amount of authenticity, which means that the arts have to prove some sort of link to classics. This dilemma is bridged by a number of approaches that enable combinations both legitimate within the art world and within the MFA's policy, for example, by linking classic and contemporary art and artists in concepts where the two are portrayed to complete and enrich each other. The MFA-supported (Consulate General in New York) Munch museum project setting together Munch and Melgaard is one concrete example. Here, classic and contemporary art are linked, assumedly both to link the past and the present (making the image of Norway as a culture nation more authentic), and to link past and present expressions, aiming to mutually enrich both. In a speech by the Norwegian Minister of Culture, opening an art exhibition of the Norwegian painter Nikolai Astrup (1880-1928) in London in 2016, she said:

From Henrik Ibsen to Jon Fosse, Edvard Munch to Melgaard, Edvard Grieg to Aurora Aksnes, tiny Norway has fostered many great names, and many of the greatest have become at least as great abroad as at home. Common for all of them is that they show the boundless potential of the arts.

As the informants at the Foreign Service mission in London stressed, working with the promotion of Norwegian art and culture, local context is essential. Hence, what is in demand here comprehensively influences how the work is done. This also has to be reflected in how nation branding is done, as the narration has to be locally adjusted. One dimension here is that while the art discourse is increasingly transnational, local contexts still have separate trends and conventions that must be considered. As one informant explains, when it comes to literature, visual and performing arts, (particularly) London cultural life is generally more into classics than other important Norwegian art destinations like New York or Berlin. When it comes to music or architecture, for example, the picture is completely different, reminding us that we should be careful making general claims within the art field; the different sub-fields relate to vastly different contextual conditions. Nonetheless, the slightly traditionally oriented taste within literature, visual and performing arts in the English territory helps explain the focus on Ibsen (who is the second most performed playwright after Shakespeare) and

on classic painters (like Nikolai Astrup (1880-1928)), rather than, e.g. Jon Fosse and Bjarne Melgaard, artists who have done well in Paris or New York. In countries or regions even further from Western territories such as London or New York, local contexts dictate even more how narrations are adapted and performed.

During the fieldwork in London at the reception held for the presentation of a range of new translations of Ibsen's later plays at the Barbican, I by chance met a leading Norwegian nonfiction writer and academic with comprehensive knowledge about Norwegian foreign cultural policy. One interesting point he made was about the grand Norwegian Ibsen prize, which this person saw as nothing but a gimmick in order to put Norway on the map, both as a conspicuous culture nation (producing such art celebrities as Ibsen), but also in more general terms (which is why the prize money is so big). According to him, here, Norway acted like nothing but a state sponsor, wanting something back from its sponsorship (or patronage). This informant would much rather have preferred an Ibsen foundation that could have helped a range of artists, scholars and others working internationally with- and in the spirit of the great Norwegian playwright. According to this informant, the trouble that the prize committee got into in 2014, in giving the prize to the disputed Austrian writer Peter Handke, was a well-deserved reprimand to a committee more occupied with bringing the focus to themselves than honoring the Ibsen legacy.

#### 7.3.4 Reflections of Norway - the "*Refleks*" - rationality

As argued above, much (perhaps even most) of the nation branding that takes place aims to sell positive images of nations, both in specific and general senses. Hence, it aims to both promote the arts, hoping to give them a place in the "international cultural conversation", and more indirectly, to promote general national ideas and products. Taking a critical stance to such a promotion, one of the risks with such branding would be that the arts used would have to have certain specific qualities in order to optimize the branding effect, i.e. that a *diplomatic art* would develop. As Lending warned about in her analysis from 2000, there is a risk that images may turn sleek and one-

dimensional, and therefore not very trustworthy, either socially or politically. Paschalidis (2009: 287) claims that:

... the culture projected abroad has always been a sanitised culture, that excludes all embarrassing or controversial elements. Which country would dare today to show-case artworks which may invite criticism for sexism, racial prejudice or cultural stereotypes? The culture projected abroad is above all an uncritical culture, that excludes artworks or artists that question the dominant national self-image. Our habitual focus on the space-bound 'imagined community' of the nation, however, leaves out the nation state's international projection: how it claims for itself a cultural space beyond its spatial borders. The projection is of a cohesive community, united by an uncontroversial, shared reality, a distinctive culture and heritage. By claiming to communicate the nation, to turn it into a communication, external cultural policy is primarily a special kind of cultural display.

Lending's remedy was to secure that national images, rather than being shiny and poster-like, were allowed to contain more realistic reflections on modernity that were still positive, such as complexity and multi-culturalism (and the ability to handle such), liberal democratic values in terms of accepting critique and deviating opinions, egalitarian values, etc. More specifically, this means an interest in displaying critique, complexity and cultural heterogeneity as a strength of a modern society, instead of being a problem (cf. Bhabha 1990).

There is no doubt that this rationality was incorporated into MFA thinking in the years following the new Millennium. One of the clearest examples is the "*Refleks*" project, which was launched by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Støre in 2007, as a response to what was believed to be the major foreign policy challenges coming from globalization effects (Stie 2013). One of the principal subjects of the project identified by internationally renowned academics, such as Professor Peter J. Katzenstein at Cornell University in the U.S., was national identity. And, the most important result from the project on this matter was a foreign policy thinking that embraced, rather than feared, internal conflict (at least as long as conflicts are as limited as those in Norway). During one of the interviews, a senior diplomat in New York refers to this thinking, in explaining the effort to be completely open for art that potentially breaches with- or criticizes what is otherwise portrayed as preferable Norwegian images:

I think that what could be termed the *Refleks* thinking is something that has settled in a way, in how to think in foreign policy in general, in the sense that... to dare displaying conflict. Well, the *Refleks* project does not exist anymore, and there is a new government and everything... but a rationale

about how to speak about things in our system, and how to do things, has been established. And a set of expectations at home about how we work abroad.

The strategy of displaying a complex, diverse, multi-cultural Norway, not excluding images that also reflect flaws and shortcomings, were not bred in isolation. Today, the governments in numerous countries are committed to relating arts and culture to a growing debate about freedom of speech and liberal democratic values. Because liberal and open-minded ideas have increasingly become the new dominant self-image, art that challenge self-images as such have become more or less completely integrated in the way we tend to see ourselves. Furthermore, it has become a part of how we think it is profitable for others to see us. In a Nordic context, the comprehensive debate around the Mohamed cartoons in the Danish paper *Jyllandsposten* is an obvious example. While some readings of this artistic act stress its challenging character, confronting a large part of the Muslim world, an alternative interpretation that has been suggested is that it instead emphasizes the systemic frames within which such an artistic act was made possible. No doubt, these drawings have become an important part of not only Danish foreign cultural policy; it has also become an important part of their cultural export, although not only in the form of artworks, but in the form of ideas.

Examples similar to the above (though without the enormous gravity of the Mohamed cartoon case) are also found within Norwegian foreign cultural policy. Where Paschalidis questions whether nations would dare to promote offensive or in other ways problematic arts, this is exactly what occurred as the Norwegian painter Bjarne Melgaard from 2000 on became one of the most frequently promoted artists of Norwegian foreign cultural affairs. Accused of being sexist, pandering with child pornography, and many other things, Melgaard became somewhat of an enfant terrible of the Norwegian effort. Still, he was massively used, endorsed by the OCA, the MFA's advisor organization in cases of visual arts and of the MFA (and in particular the Foreign Service) itself. When asked about it, informants from the MFA in general held it to be unthinkable *not* to work with the painter because of his controversial political meanings.



Another example was the Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgård, at the time an increasingly popular author within the American market, who engaged heavily in a debate over the Austrian novelist Peter Handke's controversial support to Serbian nationalists during the Balkan war, in favor of Handke and his literary authorship. Also here, albeit controversially, the MFA would have found it unthinkable not to continue to work for the Norwegian writer's U.S. career. On the contrary, this aspect of Knausgård's authorship and personality was instead made a special point at one of the important literary festivals – the New Yorker Magazine's literary festival in an interview with the renowned critic James Wood – that took place that autumn.

Consequently, it is fair to assume that this artistic expression within the MFA, although potentially problematic to some, was interpreted and articulated as a reflection of a liberal country with an extensive freedom of expression. It should be noted that such pragmatic considerations indeed are easier made at the Foreign Service mission in London or New York than in Moscow or Ankara, and thus to a degree is context-sensitive. This reservation is sustained by some of the informants from the Foreign Service that have served in less liberal states than the ones mentioned here. Foreign policy is principally about mediating between different, often deviating interests; balancing the need for not being overly offensive while abroad and in local settings with needs for the promotion of Norwegian interests is therefore an everyday diplomatic reality.

Another example relates to art that criticizes official Norwegian policies. According to Paschalidis, one would assume that official foreign cultural policy would avoid art that questions or criticizes important policies in important policy fields. My informants claim the opposite, namely that to put forward the most ardent critiques only strengthens the perception of a liberal nation where ideals about artistic, democratic freedom are really taken seriously. One concrete example is the Norwegian film, *The Goodness Regime*, which was displayed at the highly prestigious Performa Art Festival in New York with support from the MFA. The film critically engages in Norway's peace diplomacy, holding it to be hypocritical and naïve. The title is a direct reference to the Norwegian professor

of political science and development studies Terje Tvedt, who has published a number of books and scientific articles on this subject, and who is also the originator of the term *goodness regime* (2006). In several of the interviews with senior diplomats at the Norwegian Consulate General in New York, this case came up as one that would illustrate that there really is an arm's length distance between the curator who selected the film for the festival and Norwegian authorities. The consulate, the MFA or other Norwegian authorities would never even think of taking actions against the film being displayed. On the contrary, they claimed. One said:

Since I started, there has never been any conflict. And I would not work here had I experienced censorship or instructions to avoid working on projects because they could be controversial. Then I could not have had this job. A good example is Performa, one of the world's leading biennales focusing on performance art. It was one of the largest projects we did last year, in which Performa cooperated with seven art and cultural institutions in Norway. One of those, Kunsthall Oslo, chose to show a movie called *The Goodness Regime* by Jumana Manna and Sille Storihle, which ... well, it's a video work that could be interpreted, which many do, as a critique of Norway as a peacekeeping nation. We had a round on it internally here in advance of the screening, just to clarify there was never from our side any thought about opposing... to withdrawing support, etc. Our support to Performa was given regardless of what they wanted to show. That would be a strange way of working. So there was never talk of withdrawing support, the only thing we discussed was: What role can we play here?

A somewhat surprising perspective on this (and other) examples of a critique of Norwegian practice found in the material is the idea that such a critique helps rather than harms Norwegian interests. This is particularly in that it reflects a will to a liberal, critical discourse, in turn reflecting exactly the modern Norway that is important (and more important than having an immaculate reputation as a peace nation) to show.

The two cases seen here – the Mohamed cartoons and the Goodness Regime – interestingly highlight how both the MFA and the Foreign Service need to pragmatically mediate between uses and displays of culture in the blurred and sometimes even dangerous area between praised Western liberal values like freedom of expression and the arts' and culture's potentially tortious and offensive powers. How the authorities and the MFA respond to this dilemma are important discursive articulations intended to settle a common Norwegian attitude or line.

One interesting recent example of such an articulation relates to the case where Facebook censored Nick Ut's famous Vietnam War picture with a young, naked girl

running away from a bomb attack, claiming it was part of a global scale strategy to remove images which could be perceived as offensive.



Illustration 6: Erna Solberg personally engaging in Facebook censorship of famous historic images, 2016

It evoked international interest when the Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, publicly and explicitly engaged in the censorship, challenging both the Facebook Corporation and its CEO Mark Zuckerberg in a direct and activist tone, herself posting famous historic images with self-made censorship strips<sup>63</sup> (Illustration 6).

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<sup>63</sup> <http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/i-hele-dag-har-hun-ligget-i-krig-med-facebook-na-varsler-erna-nytt-skritt-i-striden/62482468>; retrieved 14.09.2016

It should be noted that this picture more than anything epitomizes the massive international protest against the war, one that Solberg's own conservative political party endorsed at the time. It is difficult to understand this activist act in any other way than as an ardent articulation of a Norwegian policy stressing the importance of freedom of expression and speech. It is also not hard to imagine that this act is highly influential in shaping the Norwegian foreign cultural policy discourse, strongly signaling that: 1) freedom of expression is a core value of Norwegian society and culture, and 2) Norway is not afraid to make this view heard, even if it could mean negative consequences.

One aspect of national identity and its narrations concerns incoherence between images needed internally and externally. More specifically, this relates to where national self-images are potentially viewed negatively abroad, and are hence part of what Subotic and Zarakol (2013) refer to as national *cultural intimacy*. They write:

In anthropology, the concept of cultural intimacy expresses those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of international criticism for the state, but are nevertheless used to provide insiders with a sense of national comfort, understanding, and self-reflexive, ontological security. Cultural intimacy helps illuminate how states present themselves internationally and how they understand themselves domestically. It can also explain the seeming discrepancies and contradictions between a state's domestic and international identities. Cultural intimacy, in other words, explains the mutual reproduction of different levels of identity. (2013: 1)

The notion of cultural intimacy, and the critical perspectives it evokes, are also interesting within the Norwegian case. For example, it relates to how we tend to see ourselves as a people of hunters and fishermen, and thus entitled to hunt for whales, a business that most other countries tend to view as problematic in an environmental context. Another is the obvious mismatch between Norway as a large oil producer and our self-image as a leading nation in the fight against climate changes (e.g. funding rainforest projects in the Amazonas). It is regarded a state matter to balance the two needs for imagery, something that calls for attention to the strategies taken into use doing so. The arts are in many ways perfect in order to articulate contrary narrations of behavior viewed as problematic abroad, but legitimate or necessary at home. Art critical to certain types of practices (oil production seems a relevant example here) may appropriately blur international views of Norway, balancing, unifying or rationalize two basic needs that do not really go together. In this sense, it relates to an inverted version

of the unity through diversity strategies that Lähdesmäki analyzes with regard to the EU (2011).

#### **7.4 Art and place: Problems with representation**

As art and artists become part of foreign policy and the works of the MFA, they inevitably enter a nation-state framework where the relationship between art/artist and place is being actualized. This also actualizes some interesting questions. In this section, three such questions are highlighted: First, I ask how art is related to places. Second, to many artists and cultural workers, the concept of national representation potentially represents a somewhat problematic part of international operations. This is primarily due to the arts' reluctance to being labeled, as such labeling is thought to draw attention away from the value of the art itself. Based on this, I ask, what exactly is problematic with art being related to places (and in this case, particularly nations)? In the case of foreign cultural policy, to foreign policy officials such a labeling, linking nation and artists/art together, is imperative, in order to systematically work for national interests. This potential mismatch of interests and needs hence represents an interesting cultural policy dilemma. Thirdly, I ask: How is this dilemma negotiated within the foreign cultural policy discourse?

In her book, *One Place after Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Miwon Kwon (2004) examines the importance of art's relationship to place, i.a. posing critical questions concerning the status of originality, authenticity, uniqueness and authorship. Relating to urban theory, postmodern criticism in art and architecture, and especially the present-day debate on the unstable relationship between place and identity, what she calls the *disappearance of site*, she identifies three paradigms within site-specific art from the 1960s up to today. Interestingly, she asserts that the framework for such site specificity has broadened successively into the present *discursive* paradigm. Within this paradigm, she finds as a shift from a *sedentary* to a *nomadic* model, a shift from a close relationship to an increasingly looser, more unstable relationship between subject/object and place. The development Kwon describes is thus familiar to that of

the deterritorialization processes seen throughout society in general during the same period. In her conclusion, Kwon sees it as historically inevitable that we discard the nostalgic notion of “site” and identity, connected in essence to an actual place. “At the same time, the yearning for this close constant relationship, which is related to the experience of identity and safety, will never go away,” Mariska van den Berg (2004) asserts in her review of the book. Hence, she concludes, “The model that Kwon proposes for art therefore encompasses the nostalgic yearning for ‘place and identity’ as well as the recognition of an unstable (nomadic) relationship between subject and place” (ibid.).

Kwon’s analysis precisely sums up the many-faceted and ambivalent relationship that many artists and cultural workers have in terms of whether to integrate or distinguish art with/from place. From a general perspective, place becomes relevant to artists and their works in a number of different ways. Often, art signifies places in quite commonplace ways, like when films, photos or visual art motifs depict specific sites and site-specific objects, literary texts describe and represent sites and site-specific environments, etc. Often, but of course not always, these sites relate to the artist directly, by representing his or her geographical origin, but as sometimes also indirectly, as such origins are often potentially believed to influence the art production regardless of the artist’s later location; the place and the conditions within which you grew up is often considered a strong determinant for how people express themselves. Motifs with distinctive addresses may hence potentially give the artwork a much-wanted distinguishing effect. One informant from the film sector explains how this may take place:

I think, the Norwegian films that tend to be most successful abroad are the ones that hold an originality to its story that can be linked to Norwegianness, but that doesn’t have to be linked to Norwegianness.

This argument relates to a much seen focus within the arts emphasizing the somewhat paradoxical binary opposition local-global, what is at the same time both original and general. An informant from the field of literature asserts much the same, as she rhetorically asks:

What books become successful abroad? *Out stealing horses*<sup>64</sup>, for example, is translated to many different languages and sells very well. And, it is very local. Very rural and tied to one place. That may surprise you, you would think that that book was very Norwegian, and then it becomes an international hit. Norwegian authors are often... it is a lot of nature, landscapes, geography. And that seems to excite foreign markets. That tells me that great literature can be as local as it wants, when it is good it takes on general qualities, then it hits across borders.

The informant reminds us about the arts' tendency to believe that true quality knows no boundaries. The local-global notion, with its inherent focus on locality and origin, may hence be seen as an underscoring of just the dissolution of geographical boundaries, paradoxical as it may seem.

Consequently, it is perhaps not strange that where an artist comes from is an important piece of information for an audience inquisitive about understanding and familiarizing themselves with that artist, quite independently of whether the artist places any direct or indirect emphasis on such a relationship with him- or herself. Conferring the former sections dealing with narration, it is of course easy to see that biographical elements relating to place play a large role in the production of an artist, both as such a production is performed by the artist him- or herself, in the form of a self-narration, or by others. One example that illustrates how an artist (art) - nation -link could very well be a strategic move by the artist or his/her professional supporters relates to the function such a label has in establishing a distinction between one artist from the lot. An informant from the MFA asserts:

Another example is... Nico and Vinz, the musicians, there it is Warner Bros. that wants to produce an identity for them, to give them an added value here, so that they can distinguish themselves from the lot. So Warner has made this photo shoot where they pose in Norwegian knitted jerseys, and with the Norwegian flag, and... [cf. Illustration 4] And so they want to connect to us and to do something with us. Like, to sharpen that Norwegian identity thing, right... Norwegian artifacts. Flag and, I don't know what...

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<sup>64</sup> A novel by the Norwegian author Per Petterson (2003). It was translated into English in 2005 by Anne Born, published in the UK that year, and in the US in 2007. The English translation won the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize and the 2007 Dublin IMPAC Award, one of the richest literary prizes in the world. Time magazine's Lev Grossman named it one of the Top 10 Fiction Books of 2007, ranking it at #4, and praising it as a "page-turner." It was also shortlisted for the American Best Translated Book Award in 2008.

As this shows, the artist, and not least interests behind artists, may have a number of reasons for claiming a geographic origin to their artistry, despite the fact that such a link at the same time is seen as a potentially unfortunate labeling within other parts of the art discourse.

Artists' and cultural worker's more or less strategic approach to the use of place that is described above also holds a less strategic counterpart. This approach, that often seems to be unconscious or implicit in the artists' operations, relates to what could somewhat imprecisely be captured by the notion of patriotism or national/regional pride. Again, the connection between place and identity comes reveals itself, as Kwon points out. This idea takes as its point of departure that artists represent a national discourse that has certain specifications, which means that art will be carriers of symbolic values tied to nationality. This sense of patriotism works in both narrow and broad terms, i.e. it could comprise a regional or national art sector or scene, national identity and self-images, or both. In the first case, a symbolic indebtedness to a domestic discourse is probably in play, as in a collegial wish not to downplay the Norwegian art scene in general. In this way, such images and narratives are reproduced with the help of artists. This is in fact a bit ironic or paradoxical, as artists often tend to claim that nationality plays no role in their artistic thinking. Again, the argument returns to the important point that there is a considerable discrepancy between the fact that international art and cultural relations from an art discourse's perspective is above borders and nation state-technicalities, but at the same time requires the same borders in order to be international. Also, this is interesting from a foreign policy perspective, as the MFA is set to present Norwegian art abroad, knowing that the artists would probably claim that the very national interest that the ministry is set to serve is of little or no interest to them.

In the case of a more general patriotism or light nationalism, this points to artists' tendency to keep a sense of national belonging, grounded in important identity signifiers like language and notions of common, national cultures. An important thing to take into account when analyzing collective identity, for example as Swidler or Lamont and Thévenot do in terms of collective cultural repertoires (2000, 2001), are their status as



deep structures. Being Norwegian or specific forms of Norwegianness hence tends to be such deep structures. This means that in situations that matter, they tend to overrule structures that relate to occupation or interest. This explains why artists, otherwise claiming that their art, or any other art for that matter, should be regarded as independent of or superior to questions of national or other boundaries or origins, still tend to deviate from this rhetoric in important situations where questions of identity become important. One informant from the New York Foreign Service mission reminds us of why:

I know from personal experience, I have lived abroad in several rounds and one is never as Norwegian as abroad, you know... Suddenly, one has loads of stuff in common when meeting outside of Norway.

This could also be seen as a situation where the agent relates to- and acts on the grounds of different discourses with internally different values. Thus, in specific situations, being Norwegian abroad becomes more important, whether consciously or not, than being, e.g. an artist. The agent is both, and relates to- and acts upon both, but the discursive configuration that pertains to the practice in different cases will be finely tuned according to the situation.

Despite art and culture's obvious connection to place, these representational roles also pose a series of problems. In the next sections, I attend to some of them, being both practical and more ontological. In the first case, challenges relate to questions like: How do you establish the nationality of a work of art or an artist, as both categories often exceed state boundaries. Is a symphony written by a Norwegian composer, recorded with a Hungarian orchestra with a Chinese violin soloist a Norwegian, Hungarian or Chinese work of art? This and related problems are the direct cause for the Norwegian Film Institute to come up with a tool that deals with Norwegianness quite concretely. It is called the national culture test, and by given criteria aims at establishing whether or not a film may be considered Norwegian. Four criteria are considered, from which three have to be fulfilled. The four are that:

1. A submission or literary work is originally written in Norwegian or Sami.
2. The main theme is related to Norwegian history, culture or society.

3. The action takes place in Norway or another EEA country.
4. The work has a significant contribution from the authors or artists resident in Norway or another EEA country.<sup>65</sup>

Even though these criteria highlight Norwegianness and government's relation to this concept, the purpose of it is foremost practical. According to an informant from the Film Institute, the reason behind the test is *not* to determine whether an artwork is Norwegian *enough*, in terms of some plots, characters, casts, etc. being widely agreed as particularly Norwegian, but "to protect, so Steven Spielberg could not come here and apply for money to make their films. Quite simply."

In many ways, the test hence illustrates the complex ways in which both the art field and the MFA have to operate in order to balance the multitude of interests and needs that characterize the field of foreign cultural policy. It is, however, not able to state Norwegianness in other ways than formally establishing some link between a work of art and a set of criteria by which the formal Norwegianness is accepted or refuted. For this reason, it does not relate to the more moral aspects of representation dilemmas and problems. In one of the interviews, a top diplomat reflects on the representational aspect of promoting Norwegian art and artists abroad:

To the artists, the Norwegian artists that is, it's not really that important the thing about being Norwegian. I think they really just want to be part of the great melting pot, to be part of the global, international community. And, not all wish, perhaps, to be that... very Norwegian. So, we should be careful about that.

Art sociology literature often stresses how the arts see themselves as non-reducible to labels, e.g. as relevant in this case, nation-states (Becker 1984, Bell-Villada 1996, Bourdieu 2000 [1993], Belfiore and Bennett 2008). This is a position that is not least epitomized by the aforementioned architectural firm Snøhetta, who on their webpage state the following as an introductory vision: "Snøhetta is a place that nobody is from,

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<sup>65</sup> The list is found at <http://www.nfi.no/bransje/informasjonsbasen/lenker/presiseringer/kulturtesten>. It was also listed in an interview with a NFI representative.

but anyone can go to.”<sup>66</sup> This formulation elegantly holds a double meaning. Firstly, it of course describes the Norwegian mountain Snøhetta (from which the firm has taken its name). Secondly, at the same time as it undoubtedly signals a Norwegian origin, it also symbolically signals that the mountain, just as the art and culture itself, is detached from national or geographical moorings, and is thus open to anyone.

The rejection of confining categorizations within the arts closely relates to its historically important and defining request for autonomy. To state it even more clearly: an intrinsic feature of foreign cultural policy is its dichotomized state between representation and a rejection of having to represent anything but itself. For the sake of the structure of the argument, and moreover in an attempt to attach it to the philosophical framework that it grows out of, this foreign policy paradox can fruitfully be viewed in relation to two major, however, contradictory German traditions dealing with the concept of *spirit* [Geist], i.e. Herder (1965 [1791]), Kant (1951 [1790]) and subsequently Hegel (1977 [1807]). In his work on aesthetics, Kant argues that esthetic judgements, and therefore the arts as they are constituted and defined by such judgements, closely relate to an enriched and free spirit and ability to reason. However, to Kant, spirit ranks over reasoning as the ability that reason emanates from the spirit (1951 [1790]). Hence, arts and aesthetics are not simply results from processes of reason and reasoning, but underlying premises for such processes. Because of this, Kant came to see art and aesthetic judgments as principally universal, superseding the individual and established as common sense (ibid.). Subsequent to this, Hegel, who claimed that art universally functions as a carrier of potential self-insight and self-expression, shared a Kantian view. Spiritual freedom precedes the ability to reason, and since aesthetics allow us to contemplate such spirituality, it forms values in itself of high importance (Hegel 1977 [1807]). As a means of engaging the human spirit, a Kantian or Hegelian view on the arts holds out the arts as something self-evidently valuable, an end in itself and a necessity

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<sup>66</sup> <http://snohetta.com/about> Retrieved 05.09.2016

for humanity. For the same reason, the arts should be seen as something profoundly human, superior to arbitrary rules or regulations. Because the arts represent an inter-human ability to grasp the world, it does not confine itself to certain societies, communities, groups or strata. On this point, the ideas of Johan Gottfried Von Herder have deviated substantially. Although principally sharing Kant's philosophy of aesthetics, Herder was far more radical in terms of linking specific modes of spirit to social groups, i.e. a non-universalist appropriation of the conception of spirit. To put it slightly more crudely, Herder nationalized spirit, and consequently its aesthetic representations.

A part of the labeling complex that has shown to be highly problematic are attempts to tie artistic qualities directly to national peculiarities, i.e. to claim that high quality is a result of the share of national origin. Over the past years, this complex, which relates closely to national identity, has been widely discussed in academia. What pertains to this is, as Nielsen Nielsen (2010: 252) argues, a notable turn from "definitions that construed culture and identity as static, self-enclosed constants, as essences" to today's debate "entirely dominated by positions defining themselves anti-essentialistically." However, in line with the point that there are a number of positions within such anti-essentialism, "the crux of the matter" as Nielsen continues, "is therefore on which premises the non-essentialist viewpoint is established" (ibid.). This becomes especially important, as neo-classical critique has suggested that relativism naïvely neglects or contributes to postmodern economic, social or cultural effects, thereby potentially causing clashes of civilizations (Huntington 1993, Waltz 2001 [1959]). In this latter view, national states, though having flaws, represent a necessary organizing of the world, and national identity is an important part of keeping them together. A sense of belonging to a geographical site is central to this. As indicated in the former discussion, within social science, and perhaps perfectly contrary to natural science, the burden of proof to claim that a concept like identity is not a construct is on the essentialists. However, can we say that identity is only an idea? Alternatively, to ask the questions somewhat differently: Is how we perceive and explain identity scientifically a result of individual or collective

perception and explanations only? Would (national) identity exist without human abstractions of it?

A discursive approach to foreign cultural policy stresses how values are socially construed and how different interests struggle to justify their understanding of that meaning as dominant within the discourse. Within this perspective, however, typical Norwegian values and qualities are seen as social constructs, rather than essential qualities, and thus are not typical in any sense other than that they at one moment are attributes that hold a relative consensus that are typical. They therefore remain discursive claims or narrations (cf. Lähdesmäki). Within everyday life, such dominant narratives take on forms of common sense, which means that they are not seen as necessary to challenge or question. They are simply unreflected, and thus hold great power. “Typical” Norwegian qualities or values, for example the ones central to a foreign policy discourse, such as Norwegians having a democratic disposition or that they are particularly suited to negotiate peace, are produced because they have certain effects. These effects include stabilizing internal relations, for instance it is seen as important for a nation to have a certain amount of national self-esteem or to keep a position as an underdog (though with the ability to surprise when underestimated), or even to play a victim role in the view of the rest of the world.

In the introductory chapter to *Questions of Cultural Identity*, titled *Who needs identity*, Stuart Hall deconstructs national identity, placing himself among those who have uttered an “anti-essentialist critique of ethnic, racial and national conceptions of cultural identity and the ‘politics of location’” (Hall 1996: 1). Hall argues that, “the concept of identity does not signal a stable core of the self” (ibid.: 3), in the meaning of a collective agency of common experience or common origin contributing to a sense of community and belonging. Here, Hall’s concern equals others’ problematizing a classic Herderian notion of Volk and Volksgeist, e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) (invention of tradition) or Bendix (2000) (*folklore* and *fakelore*). Contrary to a common sense understanding of identity as a set of distinctive features characterizing a group or community of individuals, and thus making them recognizable, Hall’s constructivist approach sees

identity as a social process, continuously constructing and reconstructing what the meaning of identity within different relevant contexts is. His argument mainly departs from a perspective that regards identity as a concept for positioning in an ongoing struggle over symbolic power, or to see issues of identity as discourses of power.

Individuals' articulations of identity are viewed in their totality as part of power struggles between existing, collective discourses (Benhabib 2002, Nielsen 2010). In this sense, compared to a more reflexive, experience-based approach to identity (cf. Giddens 1991), Hall's argument is strong. Yet, it is not a strong claim within a constructivist context. Even if Hall, with reference to Butler (1999), problematizes how gender is produced socially, he does not claim that this feature does not biologically exist; even if he suggests that identity is not a nucleus, neither is it, as Bauman (2001) maintains, a concept of continual transformation. Rather, what Hall is passionate about is the potential an essentialist notion of identity contains for a "politics of exclusion" (ibid.: 2). The danger of such exclusion, he asserts, partly exists because a centralized identity construction means an exaggerated focus on an imagined core of distinctive features, and partly because this core is defined not by what makes it up but what does not. Thus, anything outside of the imagined community, or within the margins, is in danger of being considered suspicious or even alienated.

This political use of deconstruction has good intentions. However, could it at the same time possess a problematic side? Of course, it rightfully focuses on the claim that identity is not an essence. At the same time, it is important to remember Bloor's point, which is that even if social conventions in theory may be seen as arbitrary representations, this tends to be just that: a theoretical position. In practice, conventions are conventions for a reason. Maybe, we sometimes fall victim to missing something that we should see towards the discipline of phenomenology to encounter: the fact that the concept of identity also comprises an embodied experience. The sense of belonging may not be an intellectual sense alone; it appears as a complex sense of body and mind that is crucial to human beings. This is an area where the need for a pragmatist constructivist reading of identity may prove just right. Some claim that it is "typically" Norwegian to have a

close relationship to nature or to skiing, whereas others have rejected this as a mere construction.

Do Norwegian artists represent a peculiar sense of light (film), melancholy (literature) sound (jazz music), etc.? Obviously, constructions, but is this all wrong? For instance, when it comes to skiing, there is plenty of empirical data showing that it is indeed a popular Norwegian activity (e.g. ski sales, attendance to live and TV-sent ski events, athlete idolization, etc.) And, lots of foreigners claim that they see or feel blue, crisp colors when listening to Jan Garbarek (Whitehead 2012). Still, these social conventions may cause controversy, such as when Anita Goldman (2013) claimed that skiing contains an element of fascism. It may not necessarily be the scientist's responsibility to give normative analyses on these matters, sanctioning one or the other perspective or providing final answers. Even so, he or she has a responsibility to think this carefully through. Since we, as social scientists, deconstruct what we claim is constructed, we should carefully consider the effects of this. We should remember that we might reconstruct just as much as deconstruct, and thus keep Hall's warning about replacing one truth claim with a "truer" one in mind.

The analysis above has focused on how art and cultural expressions relate to places, and how such relations may be seen as problematic. In the case of foreign cultural policy, however, to foreign policy officials such a labeling, linking nation and artists/art together is imperative in order to work systematically for national interests. This potential mismatch of interests and needs hence represents an interesting cultural policy dilemma. In the following, I turn to how this dilemma is negotiated within the foreign cultural policy discourse.

As indicated, the arts' reluctance to being given a representational role represents an analytically interesting dilemma for the MFA. In order to serve Norwegian interests, both wide and narrow, and that is indeed what the MFA and Norwegian foreign policy are all about, the MFA has to be able to make some kind of connection between the (artistic) activity or product and Norway. It is very clear from the empirical material that the MFA

is aware of this dilemma. That is, at the same time as they are clear about their need for some way of linking the art and artists they support with Norway, they are also aware of the arts' ambivalence to such a representational function. One could therefore say that the MFA actually has internalized much of this ambivalence within their own organization and operations. One of the informants from the Foreign Service typically says:

Then you have the Norwegianness. What characterizes Norwegian and Nordic art? That is not so easy. And most artists are not very engaged with it either. But it is a precondition that the Foreign Service mission's logo is included in all of the promotion material, if we support something. And mostly it says here that the artist is Norwegian, they write that themselves. Only rarely do we have to tell them to include that.

The following quote from an interview with a Foreign Service mission staff member illustrates this interestingly. Here, the informant explains how the mission and its staff was somewhat embarrassed over the name *Norway Focus* at the NYABF, as it indicated an attempt to make the exhibition more explicitly market- or promotion-oriented than the MFA had at any time expected or intended.

For example at the Art Book Fair... when they used the name Norway Focus, that was not requested from the MFA. And I think, I don't know why, but my impression is that the Consulate General somehow felt bad about that name. That it implied that it had been enforced on the Art Book Fair from us. That we would have preferred being more a sort of an invisible hand than being like... Here, we promote ourselves. Because we did not require anything with regard to... well, we ask them to include our logo in things we sponsor, but there are no requirements about the size of that logo or anything.

**R:** I don't quite get that... You are working for Norwegian interests, and then you distance yourselves from what is Norwegian, and feel awkward when it says Norway Focus? Could you please explain that to me?...

**I:** Yes... Well, I quite agree, it is a bit difficult. But I think it also has something to do with the former practice of the Service. My impression is that it used to be less professional... that it used to be about paying more attention to the explicitly Norwegian component than the artistic... For example, at the Performa festival, they used to... they did not take part in the Performa main program. They chose to make a separate Norwegian Performa, where they served smoked salmon and scrambled eggs and had like an affected Norwegian theme. That is what I think some fear... well, that all initiatives and agendas are to be mixed into something Norwegian; that it becomes a hot pot of Norwegianness. And then you have to have smoked salmon, and you have to bring Sissel Kyrkjebø<sup>67</sup>, and...

**R:** OK. So, almost like a parody...

**I:** Yes, a parody. The cliché of Norwegianness, so to say. And, I think that is why some want to separate different sectors or interests some more. Of course, many times, they intersect... but the bottom line is, I think, that the focus is now on the quality of the projects that we sponsor, not

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<sup>67</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sissel\\_Kyrkjeb%C3%B8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sissel_Kyrkjeb%C3%B8). For further readings on the constitution of Kyrkjebø as a national symbol, I recommend Augestad (1994, 2002).



whether they are Norwegian. And that quality cannot merely be assessed by us, it has to be recognized within the field itself.

This indicates that the MFA has adopted an art field position in terms of the problematic uses of art and artist labeling, which in many ways is paradoxical. As the former sections and chapters show, the MFA is using culture and art instrumentally. One could perhaps debate whether this instrumentalism is more or less indirect, as the instrumental effects are seen as indirect effects from non-instrumental aims and operations, and that the instrumentalism is less problematic. Nevertheless, it is instrumentalism. For the MFA to adopt arts' worries over instrumentalism, sometimes even expressing such worries so clearly, at the same time as they themselves operating along this very logic, may sound somewhat peculiar. Some would perhaps even say hypocritical. Others, again, would rather say that it is part of the balancing game by which the MFA has to operate several objectives and interests, which are not always mutually consistent.

At the same time as the MFA shows a remarkable sensitivity and respect for the arts' fears of unfortunate labeling, a labeling that many fear could draw attention away from the (quality of the) art itself, within this discourse an important point is that art is in many ways site-specific. One MFA informant working in London, says:

I think this is interesting, because I suspect this is something people perhaps are more into than they themselves recognize. Because, mostly I have been thinking, and still do, I should say, that the most important thing to consider is quality... to promote quality, over the fact that it is Norwegian. I am so much more in favor of the first way of thinking, and believe that it is important for Norway, the Norwegian art scene, to be part of an international art scene, right. So, I am more engaged in the content than the fact that the content happens to be Norwegian. However, at the same time I think that a foreign audience really is interested in what is Norwegian about it. And often, when journalists here interview Norwegian artists, then it comes in: What was it about the Norwegian that inspired you? And, like... was it the nature? What is it with Norway that affects your art? That it perhaps is more important than what we tend to think, right... So, assumedly, the identity in what is presented, the cultural heritage, is interesting to people. To what extent we focus on that in our work, however, that is a different question. It is like... it is not a very clear intention behind how we mediate or promote that Norwegianness.

Another informant, working in the field of literature, asserts,

If you ask a Norwegian author, he probably would not phrase it like that [the idea that his authorship is site-specific], because it may not be something that you think of as you write. But, that geography, landscape, is important in Norwegian fiction writing, and that it is assessed as particularly interesting in other countries and contexts, Yes, I think so.

The fact that place and origin is articulated the way it is could suggest that place plays a more important role than the arts rhetorical claim. This could therefore indicate that the fear for instrumental labeling (to nations, regions or other geographical frameworks) is overplayed by those who are not acknowledging an increasingly pragmatic art field. Consequently, it seems fair to assume that the art world sees instrumentalism not as one thing, but as many, along a continuum from where it is viewed as harmful and obviously negative, to where it is not only accepted, but an inherent part of artists' own operations. It also seems fair to suggest that in this latter part of the continuum, the art world and foreign policy authorities have some common interest, something that would partly explain why the Norwegian foreign cultural policy has seen an overall turn against both a more peaceful cooperation, and a pragmatic consensus over art's role in the promotion of general interests. The debate over what is to be considered harmful or legitimate instrumentalism, here in the form of representation and labeling, is an interesting and illustrative example of discursive negotiations, in which positions and interests seek to establish what is beneficial for them as legitimate practices.

After this rather lengthy chapter dedicated to production of nation brands with the use of art and culture, the time has come to move on to a discussion of how commercial value is legitimizing culture and cultural policy within a wider frame of foreign policy.

## 8. Legitimation of culture III: Commercial value

The last of the three chapters dealing with how different social impacts from culture and the arts legitimate culture's place in foreign policy is devoted to the commercial aspects of international cultural relations. There is a focus on the commercial aspects, e.g. the means to deal with questions like should or can culture and art be profitable within an international context? As the use of the verb *should* indicates, this question is as much analytical as it is empirical. It thus implies a highlighting of questions on instrumentalism, e.g. whether dominating rationales that are most commonly connected to a commercial trade or industry discourse has also pervaded the foreign cultural discourse. In previous discussions, I have emphasized, or referred to literature that emphasizes the hypothetical status of the many alleged impacts from culture on society, promoting a critical stance towards the real effects of such impacts. A similar critical distance should be taken in the case of commercial impact. Looking at the global players within the music, film or literature industry, there is little doubt about the existence of a commercial impact (Mikić 2012). However, the relative importance of this industry, or to what extent it represents the cultural field as a whole is a different (and analytical) question (Bille Hansen 1995, Bille 2009).

Following up the analyses in Chapter 5, the main claim of this chapter is that commercial aspects are important parts of the discursive production of legitimacy of the arts in foreign policy. Most prominently, by securing art institutions and artists, an economic foundation for their international activity is an activity that to the ones involved is seen as a natural extension of the home market, but also as a potentially rewarding future export industry. The term is negotiated within both the Norwegian ministry and among its partners in the art field, although from different perspectives and with different aims. Three interesting tendencies are particularly observable: One, the government signals an increased focus on commercial value within its foreign cultural policy effort (cf. Chapter 5.2). Two, The MFA loyally mediates this focus, however without really knowing how to operate it (since they both know that large parts of the art field do not like it and that the arts on a fundamental level struggle with being commercially profitable (see

e.g. Halmrast, Nilsen et al. 2016). Three, while the ministry points at the art field's stance in questions on commercialism, the field meanwhile hesitates in making its mind up about whether or not commercial aims are legitimate. Here, the situation has not changed much since Mangset's review of the field from the mid-1990s (Mangset 1997). Nonetheless, the overarching trend is that despite the field's relatively weak commercial drive, such commercial value seems to rhetorically play an increasingly significant role in order to strengthen culture's place within state efforts in terms of general exports. A noticeable turn towards a professionalization that favors art and artists, which in some way are able to establish some sort of reliable commercial value, is hence observed.

## 8.1 Commercial ambivalence

Examples of both a purely commercial and a purely non-commercial rationality are found within the empirical material in this study. An overarching observation is that this diversity in the degree of commercialization closely relates to the diversity of the art field. Some sub-fields or sectors are considerably more commercially oriented than others, and that the degree of commercialization in many ways seems to correlate with the degree of industrialization of the cultural expression and sector. This finding largely corresponds with existing research from national contexts (see e.g. Gran, Theie et al. 2016). Another general finding (that also seems to boost the just mentioned effect) is that international activity seems to invite more to commercial thinking than domestic activity. In other words, it is easier to stay principally critical towards commercial goals at home than to seek international markets.

In a foreign cultural policy context, art's commercial value and potential, and particularly the current government's focus on this, has to be mainly seen in relation to the concept of *cultural or creative industry*, and the vast influence this industry has developed over the past half a century. Historically, as Mikić (2012) writes, the term "cultural industry" is connected with the Frankfurt School of Sociology, and rooted in the criticism of the economization of art by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Originally, it was used to describe the art and cultural goods that can

be multiplied industrially, e.g. the way the film industry captures and distributes theater performances, and the record industry records and distributes music. Here, and often since, the term is used in a “polemical manner to describe the irreconcilable opposition of culture and economy” (Mikić 2012: 14). Today, the term has expanded into new meanings, and has assumedly also lost some of the stigma that it was ascribed by the most ardent advocates of fine arts. Therefore, it has become an important part of the modern art world, not least in the sense that it is an increasingly important component of current cultural policy as is found throughout the Western world. Here, the term *cultural industry* is increasingly substituted with the term creative industry, denoting the inclusion of culture and art in its widest of forms (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005, Throsby 2010). According to Mikić, this is closely connected to a broader social trend or narrative:

Present debate and research argue that current trends and their mutual action have led to the transformation of an industrial into a post-industrial society where the role of traditional production factors has changed. The new development paradigm, where the main factors of economic and social growth are knowledge, creativity, originality and skills, has not only changed the economic structure, but also the concepts of growth and development.

The “knowledge-based economy” finds its economic support in creativity and talent, and emphasizes cultural industries as a conceptual framework within which growth generators exist. In that sense, the modern understanding of economic growth and development, which rests on the integrated economy, implies a balanced sector networking of cultural activities and industrial sectors with a special emphasis on new ideas and their creative application to development. (2012: 11)

The idea of a new knowledge-based economy and an appurtenant new labor market is believed not only to invade (and commercialize) the arts, but also to keep a reversed effect. Here, creative industries are articulated as particularly well-fit to stand as a role model of a general work life, as it is depicted as flexible, network-based, innovative, and effective. In an article on cultural entrepreneurialism, Ellmeier (2003) claims that the traditional distinctions between the cultural and economic discourse are dissolving. According to her, both an “economization of culture” and a “culturalization of the economy” are currently taking place (ibid.). Boltanski and Chiapello (1999) and Paul Du Gay (1997, 2002) have made a similar point. The political push for a more creative economy has thus both triggered and reflected the art world’s own turn towards an industrialization of cultural production, fired up by technology development and a

better consumer economy (including more leisure time to enjoy culture). The development has also been a product of an increased interconnection between the arts and different other markets. For example, according to Velthuis:

Commercialization manifests itself in many different ways in the art market. The motives of artists, collectors, and their intermediaries have supposedly become more profit-oriented and less dedicated to creative or artistic goals. As the American cultural sociologist Diane Crane put it: “[Until the 1990s], artists were motivated less by financial gain than by their aesthetic goals and assessments of their works by their peers” (2009: 333). In pursuing this financial gain, contemporary artists have become increasingly savvy, often in conjunction with art dealers, about developing their careers, aligning themselves with powerful taste makers, constructing a market for their work and cranking up prices. Artistic autonomy has slipped from their minds, while the traditional taboo on catering to preexisting demand has gradually eroded. (Velthuis 2013: 370)

With this turn, obviously a greater emphasis on a commercial logic has come in terms of both the commercial potential from culture to the producers, and the way such profit opportunities lead the way for a downscaling of governmental spending to the cultural sector. Consequently, alongside with the increased focus on the economic potential in creative industries, a focus in measuring this potential arose:

In Europe, national approaches to measuring the economic contribution of different cultural domains (e.g. cultural and creative industries) have a relatively short tradition. ...This situation changed by the end of the 1980s, when many European countries were influenced by market neo-liberalism, and public policies focused on the necessity of market forces in the economy. The main driving force was the promotion of “free trade”, entrepreneurialism, unrestricted investment flows, flexible labor markets, the decreasing role and ownership of the state in the social service system (e.g. culture, education and social security) and budget austerity (e.g. deficit spending, reducing government expenditure, and privatization of public companies). (Mikić 2012: 40)

Nevertheless, this development has not happened without resistance and counter-measures from parts of the art field. Here, the focus on economic goals is seen as a form of instrumentalization of culture and arts, something that potentially can reduce the arts’ autonomous position. The rejection of a commercial rationale within parts of the arts, what Bourdieu referred to as “the economic world reversed” (2000 [1993]), hence reflects a contrary (from the growing pragmatism that is also found) authoritative position within the art world.

This ambivalent stance towards commercialism is very much found in the empirical data of this study, as is the fact that some sub-sectors within the art field are more used to, interested in or more friendly positioned towards commercial aims and rationalities. In

questions about the legitimacy of commercial aims within the arts, it is important to communicate that this question cannot be analyzed in terms of the arts as one social field or sector. Instead, the different sub-fields or sectors seem to hold a quite heterogeneous attitude towards this question, a situation that is richly illustrated in the empirical material of this study. Where some see the art producers (the artists) as the prime agent of the arts, chances are that they will also be more skeptical to the commercial aims of a business that not only supports and promotes the art and artists in question, but also feeds off them. Where the focus is directed towards a field more in terms of a complex system of the artist and his/her network of “co-producing” agents (e.g. producers, agents, technicians, promoters, lawyers, etc.<sup>68</sup>), chances are that the opposite is the case, and that they will see the need for also developing a wider network of contributor to a greater extent.

A tendency thus is that sectors that contain industry-oriented profiles like, for example design and architecture, are also the most commercially adapted ones, i.e. that gravitate towards holding commercial aims legitimate, whereas sub-fields with a weak industrial link, like for example visual or performing arts, gravitate towards being less inclined to hold purely commercial goals as legitimate. I saw examples of that with my own eyes at the NY Art Book Fair, where many of the Norwegian artists flown in to attend the event apparently could not have cared less if they sold their books or not. In fact, they seemed more worried about having to pay extra for excess luggage for the unsold art on the plane back home to Norway, and thus pondering over whether to leave all their leftover books and magazines at the MoMA gallery in Queens.

Still, these are generalizations; one will find all sorts of positions in all sub-fields. In film, for example, it is common to talk about art house films vs. commercial films or Hollywood films. The positions will thus take the form of ideal types in a Weberian sense, abstractions that serve no individual justice, but are still capable of mapping a field as a

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<sup>68</sup> This is really what Becker refers to when he uses the term, *the Art world* (Becker 1984).

whole. Besides, it may also serve as an instrument that picks up on developments, e.g. the suggestion that some sub-fields have grown more likely to accept commercial goals than before.

In Chapter 6, international cultural work is analyzed in terms of finding new audiences and peers that expand internal, domestic standards and scopes. This rationale also finds its commercial parallel. Artists (e.g. musicians or writers) with domestic success and with strong business apparatuses could in an international domain potentially enter what has become known as the superstar economy (Frey 1998), in which revenues are so significant that it could be compared to other national export successes. The problem, however, has often been that these artists outsource their activities so that such revenues are not brought back to the artist's home country, something that in turn weakens the rhetorical point that investments in cultural export yields noticeable returns. An equally interesting perspective then is artists and institutions who find their home markets too small in order to make a living off their art production, and to whom international domains potentially offer a market or an audience for the ones who are willing and capable of reaching them. In particular, small niche artists with small home markets, and here Norway serves as a good example, expand their sales potential considerably by reaching out to a German or U.S. market. One of the informants working with architecture and design touches upon this:

Norway is too small a country for designers making a living out of designing things that are produced and sold here. It's only the Luxo lamp<sup>69</sup> that can survive that way. And then it is extremely important for the creative industry that designers constitute, architects too, but primarily designers perhaps, to make products for a much bigger market than the Norwegian one. And, in order to do that, you have to make yourself relevant [in these markets].

If Norway's five million people are the limit, most artists, but especially niche artists, soon find themselves hitting a natural ceiling, as only a small percentage of them will evoke the interest necessary to keep production going, in terms of both sales and seeking recognition. Including Europe or North America in that market, as many do, of

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<sup>69</sup> See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxo>



course opens for a much larger audience, as the informant above indicates. This could be niches like, e.g. black metal music, art house films, documentaries or children's TV, and you will find similar examples within the genres of visual art, literature, dance and performing arts. The Norwegian foreign cultural policy focus on niche arts, a focus that also includes the MFA, correlates with the focus on quality in a broad range of sub-sectors and fields. Of course it also correlates with the fact that there is an infinite number of niche venues, festivals and arenas out there, which have a high (symbolic) quality (or at least high enough) and demand for Norwegian art/artists, thereby meet both the quality and demand principle. Ironically, some of the niches that are most in need of a foreign market or audience are also among those who are most critical to a commercial rationale as a main driver of the activity. It has to be said, however, that these artists will often say that it is not the market they seek, but the audiences, the critics or the peers. This is consequently an example of how commercial aims are negotiated within the frame of international activity in general.

### 8.1.1 Low commercial degree does not mean no commercial degree

Even though the impression you often get is that art and cultural work involve a sharp division between working for commercial or artistic aims, the different sub-sectors, niches, institutions and individuals of the art world mostly acknowledge and operate within both commercial and non-commercial rationales, particularly within international contexts. It involves both different mixes of the two and different ways of strategically taking into use the thought systems that "follow" different rationales and the positions that hold them. So, even if non-commercial objectives are most commonly found within art forms holding a low degree of industrial orientation, like performing or visual arts, that does not mean that commercial rationales are not found here. For example, as one informant from the field of literature explains:

We export literature. Books are also culture, but we are dependent on being paid for the job. Sometimes we make so little money off making a sale to a foreign market that it is considerably more work behind than what we are paid for. That kind of sale is often financed by profits we make from authors that sell a lot. Hence, I guess there is an element of author service in this, and a strong desire to spread Norwegian literature widely.

Another informant, also from the literary field, says:

We are very determined that everything we do... the cultural exchange and so on is of course central, but our main intention is that books are translated and published in foreign languages. Then we know that this sometimes generate an income, sometimes not, but generating an income is definitely the aim. We would for example never sponsor an author going to a book fair in Brazil if his or her book was not translated into Portuguese. Because it is a major point that it is possible for Brazilian readers to buy that book. And the book trade is organized so that it is publishers here and publishers abroad that trade off deals and contracts, and when the copyright to a book is sold, it enters a foreign network, that is, a new professional network. This means that we are business-related, whether it is at home or abroad – perhaps somewhat different to other art forms – and it means that a commercial aspect is always present.

Here, the informant reminds us that the literary field is intrinsically a part of a global business. However, while the commercial aspect is important, it is still more an instrument to make the business run than the primary aim. It is a sound way of securing Norwegian literature being published abroad. To what extent the one goal or the other is seen as the main one will probably depend on whom one asks within the business. The person in the sales department of the publishing house will have a different opinion from the editor. Hence, for the book business, a major concern is to balance the symbolic and commercial values of the international book launch, something that is further asserted by the informant:

The book business is characterized by being both bourse and cathedral,<sup>70</sup> and that is the case for the big publishing houses as well. A lot of what is done in terms of approaching foreign markets gives very little economic return. For example, to sign a sales contract about a novel in Bulgaria, or another country, the great thing is that that novel is published in Bulgarian. But, we know that it will generate almost nothing in Euros and cents. So you cannot accuse the big publishers of being... even though they are commercial agents, they are also contributing with an element of cultural exchange.

Another cultural sector where the link to an industrial, and consequently a commercial rationale is close and evident, is design and architecture. One informant coming from this field typically reveals a very pragmatic attitude towards cultural products entering a commercial logic as part of internationalization:

Another thing I think is essential and important is to promote Norwegian cultural products so that they can generate attention and recognition in order to make us internationally renowned, that we are discovered... the things that make us attractive, both culturally, from a commercial perspective,

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<sup>70</sup> *Bourse and cathedral* is a Norwegian term used to portray situations that involve having to choose between obtaining profits and living up to other (often moral) ideals.

and from a travel industry perspective. That is, so that we can attract tourists to Norway we are going to attract interested people to Norway that can buy our services, whether it is a painting by an artist, jewelry by a jeweler or a house drawn by a Norwegian architect.

If we are to believe this informant, commercial aspects of internationalization are not only important, they are the driving force that leads to its realization.

One informant from the visual arts argues that the schism between commercial and non-commercial is artificial and old-fashioned. She says, “It is in Norway *only* that people divide between commercially and art-driven activities.” As the claim about a rejection of commercial aims within the arts being Norwegian is only verifiably wrong (see e.g. Belfiore and Bennett 2008), this could alternatively be interpreted as a discursive articulation aimed at legitimizing a new practice; that is, a practice that endorses and includes rather than refutes commercial aims. On the other hand, since trends in the art world seemingly develop in a direction with increased commercialization (Velthuis 2013), the informant’s view actually does indicate that former and traditional viewpoints on this are in transition.

Hence, this illustrates a central point well: It seems recognized within the arts that it is legitimate to operate with two different rationales or sets of values within this discourse, one that is concerned with commercial aims and objectives, and another concerned with producing the best possible art. By contrast, what is more contested is how- and to what degree these different rationales relate to one another. One of the informants coming from the film field contributes to this complex by saying: “Film is and will be a business where culture and commerce are in a mix. In the real world, the two can neither nor should be separated.”

Another sub-sector with both commercial and non-commercial agents and rationales is the field of music. Parts of it are obviously close to industrial production (e.g. commercial pop music), whereas the other is primarily non-commercial, and thus without the industry-like support apparatus that is economically rational and necessary within the first category. Examples of this are contemporary classical music, jazz music, world and traditional music, etc. The music business is therefore logically very sales oriented, while

other segments have sales as a secondary or even tertiary aim of the activity. Because the informants of the data sample come from different positions, the point of views on how the MFA works with arts and culture – i.e. whether they focus too much or too little on commercial objectives and export – vary accordingly. It is *not* hard to find representatives claiming that commercial aims have been under-focused on in this work. One informant, for example, comments on the MFA support profile:

Their support is important, but unfortunately, it is not sufficiently commercially oriented, and those who have export competence do not have anything to say in the allocation of support. Unfortunately, too many times we have witnessed that pop music is underrepresented in the MFA's funding, seen in view of what these musical genres represent in the market in terms of activity and sales. The funding is also rarely coordinated with the artists that actually currently are being exported.

Informants holding that less commercial sub-genres should have an equal (or even stronger) right to support refute this view. One such informant claims that:

The MFA support should, as much as possible, stay the way it is. If they were to enter a model with more money to fewer actors, there HAS to be a certain diversity thinking in the allocations, and commercial value or potential CANNOT be the most important criteria. Moreover, the ones that decide these allocations have to have a high competence within music, art and culture.

### 8.1.2 Commercial rationale is triggered in international cultural work

One informant from the Foreign Service stresses that commercial values follow the logic of the market or territory that is approached. In Britain, where the informant works, commercial value is highlighted within the cultural sector, simply because this is an important aspect of surviving as an artist. This focus consequently also becomes valid for foreign artists seeking this specific cultural domain. To enter into a commercial rationality as a part of breaking through in the British market therefore has more to do with what conditions you meet in the territory you seek, than with what the cultural sector looks like at home, the informant asserts. This also means, according to this informant, that the signals from a new more commercially oriented Norwegian government do not really constitute what are the true drivers behind an assumed commercial turn towards more commercial thinking in international cultural policy, the reality that meets what an artist does. Thus, "Regardless of government, our position is that the arts cannot survive on public funds alone. There must be some element of... an

interest, which is grounded in the art world itself, to create a profit.” That said, this informant also emphasizes the differences in the commercial potential from one sector to the next:

However, there is one field... We work closely with visual arts, both in terms of expert visits and press trips... For example, we work with the National Gallery, we have been doing that for two periods, with Norwegian exhibitions... and there it is not so easy to see the commercial aspect.

In cases where economic profit is recognized as a legitimate or desirable effect from international art cooperation, which is the case in particular among the more industry oriented sub-fields like literature, music or design, the ability to achieve such profits would seemingly be an adequate measure of success. However, several informants from both the MFA and the art field are skeptical about economic profit as a success parameter. This is not because they reject such profits as a favorable effect from international art activity, but rather because they claim that long-term profits from an art product are difficult to predict. The point is, one never knows exactly what art expression has the potential to break through commercially:

However, the borders are unstable here, because what seems to be the world's least commercial project one year, the next suddenly proves to be a profitable business. To promote niche projects and cultural products within the label “art exchange” could thus soon prove to be good business and a successful export article. Therefore, it is important to keep a certain open-mindedness towards- and an equal treatment of the different sub-sectors and genres in this [MFA's support]. As a department, you cannot define in advance where this or that artist will be in the future, in terms of international success.

This aspect of international art cooperation and export is interesting. It seems as if it is a reoccurring belief that any art expression, no matter how off the mainstream, holds the potential to become a commercial success. Historic examples often heard as examples of such transformation from high artistic to high economic credibility are pop art or punk. However, this argument also takes the form of a negotiation, where two (partly contradicting) arguments are applied simultaneously, one, art export potentially could have an important economic impact, and, two, there is no telling who can make that profit, ergo the MFA, the expert committees and the art organizations have to include as many as possible. Of course, this implies that no specific groups, segments or individuals should be selected on an a priori basis. The argument is interesting in light of Mangset's typology of rationalities within international art cooperation from 1997. To

some degree, it could be claimed that the above-mentioned logic is part of a democracy-ideology, which maintains that a broad selection rather than elite locomotive artists should be prioritized. On the other hand, this is not really the case, as the same informants who claim this also feel very strongly that the artists who only seldom make a commercial success are artists of high quality, even from an elite perspective. This suggests that a new dimension has grown in importance since Mangset's research, namely the position commercial success has within international art assessments. The main claim is that an important part of the professionalization that has occurred as a part of the decentralization of this field has also resulted in a greater market orientation and a legitimation of commercial success as an indicator of quality. One indication of such a development is how international art activity is referred to as (either) cooperation or export.

An important point to remember when working with international cultural relations is that such cultural relations span over a wide range, including a vast variety of activities both outside and inside of state engagement. Here, foreign cultural policy practice may be seen as a singular discourse with separate networks, artist profiles and infrastructure in a field that also includes other logics and practices. Previously, this situation has been described in terms of a foreign cultural policy field that is an intersectional space (or perhaps a battlefield) of several more or less dominant discourses. Several of the informants, particularly the ones coming from art institutions and governmental organizations other than the MFA, stress that important parts of international cultural cooperation take place outside of governmental control and influence, following other, sometimes even opposing rationales, than the ones dominating foreign cultural policy.

One of the informants, for example, claims that within the art field, a considerable fraction feels that the foreign cultural policy discourse since 2003, when the advisor organizations were given a considerable responsibility for the profile of Norwegian international cultural relations, has become market-oriented and overly competition-focused. A central aspect of this relates to the principally important relationship between internal and external aspects of cultural policies, what is often referred to in

terms of *reciprocity* (Ministry of Foreign Utenriksdepartementet 2013 [White paper report no. 19]). Internal production is regarded as an important precondition for external work; external work, including impulses from foreign art on Norwegian art life, is seen as pivotal in order to stimulate both production and consumption within a domestic context. The reciprocal character of the arts, in which impulses to and outputs from the arts are seen as irrevocably interdependent, is furthermore a crucial part of the ethos and self-understanding of the arts. The fact that the two ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs hold a split responsibility for these two modes of internationalization does not complicate things as much as it contributes to emphasizing the distinction between an administrative (political) and practice level of the discourse. It is, from an art field perspective, impossible to speak of internationalization without being sensitive to its principally reciprocal character.

### 8.1.3 Negotiating commercial vs. artistic rationales

At the same time as both an industrial-commercial and a non- or (even) anti-commercial rationale, in the tradition of the Frankfurt school, is still found within the rules of the arts, this bipolar picture is supplemented with quite a large quantity of empirical data which suggests that commercial aims and values are being negotiated as legitimate within the arts. The first place where one encounters different views on profitability and commercial values within foreign cultural policy is in the very language used in order to operate the field. The positions in the discourse closest to art forms that have industrial scopes or ambitions to their activity, e.g. literature, music and design and architecture in particular, often operate with different *export* terms, while others with weaker links to industrial or entrepreneurial discourses will be insisting on referring to international activity as *cooperation* or *exchange*. On the Internet site informing about the MFA's travel grant scheme, *stikk.no*, the latter dominates. The word art or artist export is rarely used, if at all. However, the use of the word export is not as commonplace or easily tied to an economy or industry discourse as it may appear. It seems obvious that the term is contested and thus subject to negotiations, in which the object is to temporarily close its meaning in a favorable way. Hence, when asked about what understanding different

informants had of the term export within an art or cultural context, the answers vary.

One says:

Cultural export is not synonymous with commercial profit, so I disagree that there is a difference between cultural export and cultural exchange. Or, in any case, there shouldn't be a difference. Cultural export leads to exchange of contacts and artistic expressions.

Yet, another says the opposite: "Rightly, the export term implies a commercial profit," whereas a third says:

I agree that the term cultural export is more instrumentally charged. I doubt that many (visual) artists are particularly fond of the term, even though I personally don't mind artists and Norwegian art making money abroad, rather the opposite. Cultural exchange, on the other hand, is definitely more professionally oriented, and by that I mean residency programs, workshops and artists' meetings. Cultural export is thus a term that fits better for more commercial art expressions like music and film, while within visual arts, cultural export, as I see it, is almost an irrelevant issue. By what I can recall, I can hardly remember to have encountered or considered a project that can be termed as "export."

One informant puts it this way:

Yes please, to both! And yes, it is not the same. And, I think I prefer the term "art export" over "cultural export". Art export abroad is about selling art products to a foreign market, competing on equal terms with producers from other countries, where artistic quality, art trends and economic conditions are the deciding factors. That, moreover, gives the individual artists the opportunity to see their own work and to be "measured" in an international context, meeting different audiences and work methods. Cultural exchange are often longer cooperation, where the aim is to acquire knowledge, increased skills, to find relevant partners, learn from "best practice", etc.

One informant, coming from the arts and crafts field, says that: "Cultural export implies more the commercial field design (including the related organizations, Innovation Norway and Norwegian Design Council), whilst cultural exchange relates more to arts and crafts and visual arts". The latter illustrates a rather common belief that there is a difference between the two concepts, and that these differences reflect established distinctions.

One informant from the performing arts describes this relationship as follows:

Our goal is that this activity [cultural export] over time is sustainable, but in the current economic situation, it is hard to tell. Up until now, we have been dependent on some public funding for our international touring activities, but still the situation is that we generate a significantly larger income from our international guest plays than from domestic touring.

Here, the informant indicates that even within the relatively "arty" field of performing arts, a commercial rationality related to art export exists. Long-term sustainability would



suggest not being dependent on governmental subsidies, a development that would probably cover the export concept in the meaning economists would plead. The fact that the informant refers to the bleak international economic situation shows that the arts hold a significant sensitivity to an international market, and that it, like the Norwegian export industry in general, has to deal with a relatively high domestic cost level. Lastly, the informant emphasizes the fact that they, in spite of tough competition, have greater earnings from their international activity than the domestic one. That suggests at least two points: Norway is a small art market, in particular for small or off mainstream art forms, and touring in Norway (or any other domestic market, probably) is not cheaper than touring abroad. International activity should then suggest itself to many of the artists as a relevant way of performing their art. This would also appear to be the case to a wider selection of the arts than the performing arts let alone.

One aspect of investing in/supporting Norwegian art and artists internationally, whether it is to produce commercial or symbolic profits, is that such state-financed support has a crowding-out potential. The fact that Norway as a nation invests in promoting its artists abroad, i.e. following the competition strategy rather than the cooperation strategy, has a moral aspect. Such an investment could be seen as a way of buying a place in the international art world that we otherwise (without this marketing capacity) would not have had. This fundamentally touches on the question: Is Norwegian foreign cultural policy (also) about buying a place within international arts that is less than deserved? And if so, is this morally wrong?

The informants that come from the most commercially oriented art fields also seem quite pragmatic towards this potential dilemma. One, coming from design and architecture, asserts, "Yes, it is quite possible that this gives us a stronger position in the field than others because we have the resources, but that's how it is." This also relates to the in-demand principle. Because we have money, it is reasonable to assume that more (small) venues will make contact, as Norwegian art and artists may come with a public sponsorship, and thus at a subsidized (lower) price. When asked: Do we buy a

place internationally (at the cost of other nations, institutions and artists that are better qualified but less fortunate)?, an informant from the film sector responds:

**I:** No. I would say that our biggest problem in terms of internationalization has been the opposite, that we earn too well and have too much money... Sure, many countries would probably want to cooperate with us; however, we are less interested in cooperating with them, because we are so well off here... But, in terms of buying a position within film production, I wouldn't say that that is a trend or an issue at all. However... sure, a Swedish colleague of mine did once say, -Ahh, Norway – the land of milk and honey..., in response to our support schemes.

**R:** But, for example, that practice of inviting in journalists and experts, and to wine them and dine them...

**I:** I think that most countries have just that sort of diplomacy. A lot of countries have it. In Norway, there are embassies from many, many countries. In Oslo. And, I think they operate the exact same way, quite frankly.

An interesting aspect of this is that many informants, including informants from the Foreign Service, claim that the art institutions and individuals have too great of an integrity to be “bribed” by oil-rich Norwegian art promoters. They, of course, only pay attention to whether the art is good or not. This argument is interesting, as it seeks to connect a predominately art field logic with a commercial logic. From a commercial point of view, it would be meaningless to invest resources in the promotion of art and artists if it were not to give goodwill or another return. As the empirical data shows, many of the agents involved in international cultural relations have such a commercial logic as at least part of their reason to operate. From an art field point of view, however, this effect is not really communicated at all. Instead, it points at a belief that the arts are in a way elevated over money and economic reason. Investments and advertising (which this could be seen as) that within the arts could be seen as immoral, at least from a commercial or trade policy perspective, could hence be seen as not only legitimate, but inevitable (and also desirable). The answer to the initial question about moral will consequently depend on the perspective of the one who answers it. This shows how both interrelated commercial and artistic aims and rationalities are in this discourse, but also how strategically these agents negotiate and operate, making use of the rationale that serves their situation the best.

To the MFA, it is crucial how the art field operates and conceives commercial aims and effects as a way of legitimizing foreign cultural activity. Since the ministry in response to a change in the government's attitude towards the commercial profile of such activities

has turned slightly more commercially conscious, and which is simultaneously determined to continue a close and fruitful relationship with the art sector, this turn has to be articulated and negotiated in a way that includes rather than excludes their partner. As we have seen in Chapter 5.2, one way the MFA operates this is to keep an open mind to both a commercial trade policy and a non- or less commercial cultural policy rationality.

One informant from the MFA, a senior diplomat stationed at the Consulate General in New York, asserts that more of the mission's effort increasingly goes to professional art, in accordance with the MFA's work with culture becoming and more *targeted*. Because of budget cuts, it gets harder to work with culture on a broad basis. This means that support will go to artists, with the highest priority on arenas with the highest priority. This is the key to understanding why work aimed at supporting high-quality artists accessing the highest status arenas is also often more likely to involve a commercial rationale as a driving force. Because of this, it makes sense to claim that as international high status arenas have become more commercially oriented, professional international art activity is also more likely to adapt to commercial logic. Since artists are encouraged to take paid jobs (paid jobs are what is needed in order to make the economy of international work projects realistic), they focus on the short-term part more than long-term projects, including more cooperation, etc.

At the same time as commercialization is taking place, and the MFA through its operations largely plays along in this development, it often does not relate to such processes in a very conscious way. One informant sitting at the Foreign Service mission in Paris says:

Oh yes, we have been talking... absolutely, we have been talking about art as business, but it is something that we feel that we don't... it is not something we feel we have a firm grip on. We have some funding for it, some of our projects are sponsored by eh... funding targeted for business. And this far, those projects have been within the design field. Because, design does have a very diverse character, where some are very commercial... So, we have to work on that, how we could improve the business projects. However, I think we have to be honest and say that... it lays somewhat in the future. We know it's there, but we are not very good at it, yet. And some... for example architecture could be business, absolutely, and the film industry... it even is called the film *industry*! And some design projects should be suited. Then we have to look closer into how to work with a business

approach to other types of... the other art fields we are responsible for, for example visual arts, those things...

Across the empirical data, the different positions thus bear proof of an ongoing negotiation about the export term, insofar as how profit and commercialism are to be understood and how it is best measured and reported. There is therefore reason to claim that the art field is marked by a noticeable ambivalence or by double standards in terms of art as a commodity vs. art as a creative expression, unlike most other commodities that are sold or exchanged. Because most organizations or institutions within the art field hold both of these rationales, although in a different configuration, they operationalize this potentially problematic or paradoxical position through different cultural policy strategies.

## **8.2 Legitimation of culture I, II and III, chapter conclusions**

Despite different strategies and modes of operation, governmental cultural policy approaches aimed at international contexts all involve securing a number of national interests as their basis. Such interests range from external and generic, promoting specific interests such as national music or literature businesses, to external and general, such as nation branding aimed at maintaining or (better) improving the national reputation in important markets and territories. National interests also involve *internal* aspects, aiming, i.a. to produce stable and competitive national cultural identities and self-images, both on specific and general levels. Specific, as cultural producers and institutions are produced as competitive in international arenas, and general, as nations are reminded and instructed of collective qualities (Bátora 2005, Henrikson 2005, Berridge 2010, Singh 2010, Minnaert 2012, Ang, Isar et al. 2015, etc.)

As discussed in these three chapters, this Norwegian foreign cultural policy is principally based on and legitimated with a mix of different policy rationalities, with cultural, foreign and industrial policies as the most central. These rationalities relate closely to at least three respective discourses with internal authoritative positions and ideologies regulating the discourse-specific “rules” of international activities. As these discourses

meet in the field of foreign cultural policy, one can find rich empirical evidence of an interception of discourses, positions, interests and rationales, sometimes resulting in a fertile “cross-pollination,” sometimes in conflict. One example of this is the meeting of international (art) activity within a framework of either cooperation or competition (cf. Nisbett 2013). As demonstrated in the previous sections, this approach is perhaps more of a theoretical or ideal-typical dichotomy, since most foreign cultural policy practice combines the two in a mix; assumedly, this is because every cooperation has some innate component of competition, and vice versa. In addition to serving as a strict descriptive device, pointing out what is what of the two, Nisbett’s point refers to a fundamentally moral question: Can national competitiveness in international arenas (both in terms of specific and general interests) become exaggerated? Where does the demarcation line go between legitimate and illegitimate work for national interest? Clearly, these questions suggest normative responses, for example displaying soft power as more state initiated and (suspiciously) strategic in its nature than cultural diplomacy, which is perhaps more people-to-people driven or led by commercial motifs. Thus, they invite to quite different responses, depending on what perspective is used in order to explain or promote international activity. Representatives of a trade discourse will almost certainly claim that competitiveness cannot become overdone, because it is the very nature of international trade. No doubt, this trade-oriented discursive position is also getting traction within the art world. For example, this position was interestingly dominant in the discourse at the GK in New York. From an opposite perspective, other cultural workers may see it differently, calling for cooperation rather than competition.

In Nisbett’s empirical studies, she claims that the British practice has grown increasingly competitive on the cost of cooperation, giving priority to initiatives that aim at promoting both general and specific interests, such as British products or services in general, or art and artists (artistic products) in particular (2013, 2016). The empirical data referred to above indicates that a similar development is taking place in Norway. Within a foreign cultural policy discourse increasingly engaged in the promotion of professional, high-quality art and artists in increasingly professionalized and high-quality

(status) arenas, competitive aspects are winning terrain in relation to aspects where cooperation and reciprocity are the main objects. Alternative strategies, emphasizing the reciprocal aspects of cooperation, long-term cooperation and networking, and centering on the art's need for time to develop within their own frameworks rather than achieving short-term goals in prestigious arenas, hence has had too little of an impact. All of this has taken place without the primary aims and strategies being changed.

One result of this and other cases, in which the foreign cultural policy framework has turned increasingly market-oriented, is that the agents that feel only partially comfortable with it have found alternative ways to finance their international operations, thereby leaving the foreign cultural policy framework and infrastructure open for a further specialization in the direction of a market rationale. Other informants argue that the foreign cultural policy work is both relating to- and integrated into the art field's needs and activities, and that the differences between the art and artists that actively take part in foreign cultural policy and the ones that do not (to the same degree) should not be exaggerated. In many ways, the situation that is described and discussed among these informants points toward what has several times already been described as a field of multiple intersecting and conflicting discourses. Even though both the policy level and artists have considerable skills in- and profits from operating foreign cultural policy as a seemingly well-functioning area, many of the tensions and antagonisms that Mangset found in 1997 are still found, not least within the art field itself, where some of the most ardent conflicts define the policy area as a whole. Fundamentally, in order to understand these tensions, there are a number of values and power structures specific to the arts, both as a policy field and as a discourse in which social meaning is more generally produced and maintained. The core of such values relates strongly to the art's claim for autonomy and a belief in art's intrinsic value.

After these discussions on how culture is legitimized within foreign policy and the MFA, the attention of the last analysis chapter revolves around how foreign cultural policy is practiced within the Foreign Service and diplomacy. For this reason, it corresponds to

the last of the main questions guiding this thesis, namely how culture is operationalized within a foreign policy context and on the grounds of a foreign policy discourse.

## 9. Operationalization of foreign cultural policy

On February 22, 2015, the 87th Academy Award Winners and Nominees for the 2015 Oscars are partying all night long in Hollywood. Among the winners and nominees is a Norwegian director, Morten Tyldum, for whom the Oscar awards has supposedly been a wonderful dream come true, with eight nominations for the film, *The Imitation Game*, among them the one for best picture and best actor in a leading role. Maybe to his slight disappointment, he has only received one, the award for writing with an adapted screenplay. However, being nominated for an Oscar is great in itself, not to mention being nominated for eight, so as Tyldum and his friends are partying on, the event is thoroughly announced and celebrated in Tyldum's home country of Norway. The award makes headlines in all news bulletins on TV and radio the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and suddenly the glamour of Hollywood is within reach of the Norwegian people, not exactly spoiled with such glamour.

On the national television evening news, in addition to reports and commentaries from the ceremony and from the red carpet by the reporter who was flown in exclusively for the event, the coverage from the preparations for an Oscar party at the shop of the Norwegian brand Moods of Norway shimmers over the screen. Viewers see cases of champagne bottles being brought into a fancy looking place, and then, the arrival of the happy winner and his attractive wife. In order to hear what the artist has to say, a temporary press conference spot is arranged, with a table and a cardboard backdrop decorated with sponsor logos, as with any other World Cup ski or Champion's League football press event. But something in the press room is different: the sponsors! In addition to the aforementioned Moods of Norway and the TV and film production company Trollbound Entertainment (who are also specializing in Scandinavia), the logos appearing on the backdrop are the ones of the public institutions, the Norwegian Film Institute and the Norwegian Consulate General in San Francisco.

However, viewers looking for stiff, slightly uncomfortable diplomats, way out of their usual economic or political cocktail party comfort zone, have to look elsewhere. The



diplomats are there, all right, but blending in with ease, partly untroubled by working with- and for glamorous Hollywood stars and wannabes, partly unsurprised by the fact that years of work in building up the Norwegian presence at international high-status art arenas now has come to bear fruit. The fact that all these resources were put into broadcasting the Oscar ceremony, including numerous TV and media coverage, NRK sent their correspondent to LA to cover the event; it got much primetime coverage in Norway, including the front page of newspapers, etc. – all signals that this was viewed as important. That fact that a Norwegian film director was nominated for eight- and awarded one Academy Award was evidently viewed as very important. Why? Perhaps because it reassured Norwegians that Norway is also capable of giving birth to an internationally famed film director, which is a great thing. A country that produces such a recognized celebrity should not have to be afraid that it is culturally poor or underdeveloped. The film and arts sector of that country cannot be all that bad, can it? Or something like that. The fact that the Norwegian government supported establishing such an idea adds to its strength. It illustrates that the arts are important in the production of a national idea of collective values, both in terms of representing a great (or at least a not so bad) “we,” and a vigorous art discourse capable of putting our small nation on the global map.

The last analysis chapter of this thesis is devoted to the operational branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Foreign Service (the diplomacy), and their cultural policy engagement. It corresponds in that regard to the final research questions that guide this study, empirically and analytically, namely how culture and cultural policy are operationalized within foreign policy. Again, the main empirical point of departure is Norwegian practice, particularly focusing on the part that comes under the responsibility and operations of the MFA.

Diplomacy in general and Norwegian cultural diplomacy in particular appear as interesting for several reasons: Firstly, because of their operational role, directly taking part in the first line of action, among artists and organizers, in which bureaucrats in general spend most of their time in the office, a comfortable distance from the actual

scenes of their decisions where Foreign Service personnel actually stay, and take part in the heat of the action. This is interesting, as it both suggests diplomacy as a room of hybrid agency, and because such hybridity challenges cultural policy practices at an arm's length distance from the field it is set to serve.

Secondly, the diplomacy is interesting because the scope and content of its activity over the past two or three decades has definitely been set in play. Most prominently, this is captured within what Craig (Hayden 2013) describes as a *social turn* within diplomacy, i.e. the tendency that international relation responsibilities and assignments have been moved away from state policy bodies (like the Foreign Service), and toward a broad range of agents. Within this climate, soft power strategies are no longer seen as a state responsibility alone, carried out by official representatives in state-to-state relationships. Instead, the focus has been redirected towards concepts of diplomacy in strikingly broad senses, expanding it to cover the international practice of a wide range of social agents, including NGOs, multinational corporations and even individuals (Leonard, Stead et al. 2002, Bátorá 2005, Wang 2006, Hayden 2011, Pamment 2012). Concurrently, cultural diplomacy has experienced a decrease in interest within international politics and relations. A halting interest or belief in culture and art as an effective foreign policy means following a turn towards *realpolitik* in the wake of international terrorism and the east-west cool-down, seemingly reigns in Western foreign ministries. Moreover, a trend of reduced public expenses, including budget reductions to the Foreign Service, following the past two decades of decentralizing and deinstitutionalizing foreign policy, has not contributed to counteracting the downscaling. This has led to a situation, where for example American observers speak of U.S. cultural diplomacy in the past tense (see e.g. Ivey, Cleggett et al. 2008). In Norway, foreign policy observer Kjell Dragnes claims that diplomacy in general is in a crisis, arguing that the Foreign Service with its diplomats and missions over the past years has become more or less *passé* (2009) (cf. Chapter 1.1.2).

In addition to these general foreign policy challenges, the cultural diplomacy has also had to consider a number of changes in international cultural policy and the arts. Most

of them have been discussed previously in the thesis; however, a few key words here are: deinstitutionalization and renegotiation of status hierarchies (e.g. popular arts replacing high arts (Peterson and Kern 1996), altered terms of production, distribution and consumption of art due to new models based on new technology (e.g. online global distribution models for literature, film and music replacing domestic market physical sales (Jones 2002, Bolin 2011), as well as increased travel and transnational cooperation (Hamel 2001). Finally, there is a turn towards the market through an increased focus on the arts as part of creative industries (Bille 2011, Hesmondhalgh 2013). In addition, several changes have affected the Norwegian Foreign Service's cultural policy practice more specifically. Most prominently, this has involved an implementation of an arm's length distance principle in 2003, decentralizing administrative power from the MFA to the art field, budget cutbacks to cultural policy activity and a decrease in diplomatic personnel at the foreign missions (cultural attachés), replacing them with non-diplomatic staff, in most cases locally employed art experts.

Based on the series of developments described above, one would assume that the diplomacy, in terms of foreign (cultural) policy, has experienced a noticeable loss of agency. In this chapter, this assumption is disputed. Responding to the research question phrased in the introduction asking about what role diplomacy plays in foreign cultural policy, it suggests a professionalized, pragmatic and dynamic cultural diplomacy, incorporating agents capable of mediating between artists, art organizers, the media and politicians. Promotion and the facilitation of art and culture is now taking place in a close, almost symbiotic relationship with the art field, sustaining extended networking between agents of both diplomacy and the external social field, sharing increasingly specialized skills. Analytically, this new orientation is discussed in light of a continuous cultural adaptation work, in order to be adequately positioned towards both the arts and foreign policy interests that dominate the foreign cultural policy discourse. Such cultural adaptations form a continuous flow of boundary negotiations, regulating the relationship and power structures toward important partners, legitimizing the service's activity and status. As introduced above, important components here are a strikingly

*dynamic* work mode, particularly showcased through the subject position of the pragmatic, network-driven international cultural *entrepreneur*. In the next sections, looking specifically and in detail into the workday and work mode of a cultural diplomat, the dynamic, pragmatic and entrepreneurial character of the cultural diplomacy is described and analyzed.

## 9.1 The art of (the) diplomacy

To my experience, the Foreign Service missions are bloody competent; they are professional and they are passionate, they are interested, they are entrepreneurs, and they are very helpful. So rarely... I have never come across a mission that was not good.

Advisor organization informant

In his analyses of diplomacy, Iver B. Neumann compares the diplomat with the anthropologist, asserting that the two have to have much of the same abilities to get close to people and to be able to mediate between internal and external understandings and beliefs (2011). They get close to their contacts because they spend lots of time with them; in many ways, to work in the Foreign Service is anything but an ordinary work life. Late evenings and weekends at dinner parties, concerts, exhibitions, networking events, etc. is not a cliché, it is the basic work mode. Moreover, the diplomat is an interesting role, as he or she operates in a seemingly blurred interface between national interests, as they are set to administer home interests in the meeting with “the other” and promote their own views, while being open and humble to the foreign. This is further complicated if one considers Judith Butler’s idea that the central subject, the “I” or “we,” is constituted in that very meeting with the other (2004). The subject is not there from the beginning in one stable shape or as a core, but instead is configured in each meeting, both as a settlement with the *constituting outside* (Hall 1996), and as a way of adjusting to a social realm. It is a matter of give and take identity-wise, and it is no wonder that, according to Neumann, negotiation and negotiating skills are a crucial and weighty part of any diplomat’s self-image.

A central element of diplomacy is to pay as close attention to your foreign contacts as to your home office, which you report to on a regular basis. Hence, the diplomat is

widely regarded, and they regard themselves, as mediators between two (or more) parts or discourses, placing loyalty according to the context. In contact with the other, the focus is on obtaining as much information about the foreign position as possible, which means that seeing a case from the foreign angle or perspective is a good thing, whereas in reporting back home, the focus is on reproducing this information within the context of contributing to Norwegian interests. Consequently, a diplomat pays close attention to his counterpart and the discourse this counterpart represents. A related convention is that diplomats negotiate. Sometimes, as is often the case in the field of foreign cultural affairs, they have a relatively wide mandate from home. In other cases, they may have strict instructions from home, leaving them with much less room for mediating, and in which case the position opens for being tough. However, in both cases the object is to gain as much from the situation as possible, without endangering the vital relation to one's counterpart. Important here is diplomacy's omnipresence and local knowledge. Because the structure of Norwegian external cultural policy has been regularly debated over the years, a sound argument in favor of a continued administrative responsibility set to the MFA was that no arm's length organ under the Ministry of Culture, no matter how professional and knowledgeable, could replace the huge number of foreign service missions. Nor would they be able to have the same knowledge about local contexts.

Historically, coming mostly from the bourgeoisie and holding an upper-class habitus, diplomats were often accustomed to the high arts and saw the arts as an inevitable and unquestionable part of civilized conduct (Mangset 1997, Lending 2000, Neumann 2011). Diplomacy thus has had a long tradition of relating to the high arts. Even though foreign cultural art has turned more diverse, in Norway, diplomacy recruits have regular meetings and training courses with the art advisor organizations as part of their professional training; they are even trained in Norwegian black metal music – the inclination to turn towards art forms that are seen as serious in their quality standards is still the professional standard.

A final feature of diplomacy that makes it interesting is the symbolic capital it possesses. Presumably, this is its greatest asset. As the foreign ministry, in their own words, is set

to secure general Norwegian interests of all kinds in foreign settings, any move made by the diplomacy will be seen as an act of official Norway. Add to it the symbolically charged buildings and physical surroundings that enter the discursive materiality of foreign affairs, and I think it is reasonable to assume that diplomacy has qualities that are uniquely interesting.

These and other images describing diplomats as elite members of international society, with political access, high status and distinctive expertise, is part of what Neumann (2011: 122) argues is a peculiar “hero story” that runs a productive “feedback loop between diplomatic practices and diplomatic discourse.” It is formative, as young diplomats are trained in “how to be a diplomat” (ibid.), and the image of the diplomatic hero consequently constitutes an important part of the diplomat subject position, a narrative on which professional conduct and behavior is later based. However, according to Neumann, the hero story is contrasted with another more trivial “everyday story,” reflecting a conservative conformity within the bureaucracy of the foreign ministry, a pervasive bureaucratic mode of knowledge production that by adhering to protocol and continuously seeking consensus, instead of cultivating progress, mitigates creativity and innovation. Consequently, the diplomatic subject position holds an ongoing tension between the two, partly adhering to tradition and protocol, partly to an expectation of being able to negotiate innovative solutions in difficult situations. Certainly, there are some internal differences within the service, diplomats working with security policy or economics do differ from the ones working with the arts. Nonetheless, the ethos of the diplomacy seems to stay equally strong to setting the stage for a set of specific practices.

### 9.1.1 24/7

One persistent aspect of the hero story of diplomacy, which is persistent much because it is rooted in reality, relates to the hectic and encompassing work life of the diplomat, a work life that, according to one of the informants, unfolds “24/7.” That is, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A large part of this relates to the fact that the cultural diplomats

have to stay close to two separate work forms, namely that of artists and that of cultural workers, organizers, bureaucrats and the MFA. While the latter often takes place during regular work time, from eight to five, the former often happens at night and on weekends. Staying in touch with both of these groups of people is crucial in order to facilitate for art, as the two have to be set together in an efficient way. In sum, the main objective is to relate as directly as possible to the three rationales of foreign cultural policy and to promote Norwegian art and artists in terms of both international cooperation and competition. Such promotional work mostly takes place at the request of a Norwegian organization or institution (most likely one of the advisor organizations, but it could also be one like the Norwegian National Museum, like at the Venice Biennale). The diplomacy tries to implement these policies along a wide scale of measurements and strategies, most importantly by cooperating with local partners in events exhibiting or featuring Norwegian art or artists (also economically), or in more long-term partnerships. Of course, this kind of work relates to another very important part of the work, to establish, maintain and expand relevant networks. It also relates to the very popular strategy of expert and media visits, in which diplomacy requires a lot of the planning, organizing and accomplishing. Finally, it relates to something that is not so often mentioned, but that still is an important part, namely to offer a kind of moral support to artists and cultural workers who visit. One informant from the diplomacy explains:

Some things are done spending money, others without the use of that much money, like to contribute to promotion by getting things out on the MFA webpage and newsletters. And, by what I think is one of the nicest aspects of this job, to represent [the official Norway] and just showing up. Many people just appreciate our presence. Not necessarily by doing so much other than just showing up at the exhibition, which takes place somewhere.

Cultural diplomatic work hence spans a wide range of responsibilities and methodologies on both individual and institutional levels. In the following, based on the empirical material, the most important are displayed more in detail, starting with the diplomacy's proximity to the arenas where artistic and cultural practice are actually taking place.

A seminal part of the work mode of the cultural diplomat is therefore the comprehensive socializing. Here, the cultural diplomat departs somewhat from the traditional diplomat working with general politics or economy, as it expands the bureaucratic mode that is often an important part of everyday diplomatic life (and contrary to the hero story that actually seems closer to some of the hectic activities of diplomats working with art and culture). One of the informants of the diplomacy put it like this: “Out work is extremely extroverted; we are out all the time. That is, we are in contact with people out there, and it sometimes almost feels like a PR way of working, the way we do things, right.” The informant’s reflection on a work mode that resembles that of a PR bureau is interesting. One aspect of a critical review of the Foreign Service’s cultural operations is whether this state service should operate more or less as a private (or an extension of private) promotion office for art. This question, as I will return to, implicitly touches on the practicing of an arm’s length between a policy and an operational level. Even though the service does fall on the right side in this and related questions, it seems fair to indicate that this is one of many difficult balancing exercises that it has to engage in, and even so a particularly difficult one.

The operational, extroverted character of cultural diplomacy moreover relates to the networking that it also extensively practiced, but also includes everything that contributes to staying professionally updated, e.g. seeing new art and artists, cultural workers or to follow the general proceedings within the field of professional interest.

One informant says:

Of course, everybody has slightly different ways of operating, but for me, the way it works is that I just attend things and then I meet people. Places I go because I am interested, really, not because it is a job, necessarily. It could be big events, right... the London Jazz Festival, this November, and in Cheltenham, at the Bath Festival, that sort of things, big things. But also a little cafe like Cafe Otto, that is a small venue which has a really strong position within improv/contemporary music, but still is a small, hip café in Dalston... being important, right. And we know that, because we know it, and go there, and (laughs) because we are out. We meet people. People talk. We listen... Get to know what is important, right.

However, such socializing often ends up in networking and in the art of including an important contact in the local diplomatic flow:



So, if I meet someone, say I am at this festival, then I perhaps invite the person to a lunch, and maybe an introduction to my boss, right... just to get that person into the embassy network. Perhaps that person is invited further to things, or I enter things he or she invites to. Hence, one finds new arenas all the time, really without doing that much work for it.

A central part of the in-demand principle of the Norwegian practice is to make contacts aware of Norwegian art and artists. This is done locally, at events, exhibitions, etc., but at some point, many are invited to travel to Norway in order to better see a versatile sample of the art in question. As one says:

There are lots of media and expert travels, where one... festivals in Norway, concerts, things that happen in Norway, and one thinks, -hmm, who could be the right one to go there. Then I check with some of my colleagues, maybe they have some ideas... and, then I invite them to Norway. Afterwards, we invite them to something, again, just to be informed about how it was, and to... maintain contact.

One of the most valuable skills of this work is to be able to cross-pollinate contacts over network borders:

Some time ago, we were at this festival called the London Contemporary Music Festival, where Supersilent<sup>71</sup> and Arve Henriksen<sup>72</sup> played, and there I invited the one from that venue at Café Otto that I mentioned, one from a Jazz venue called Vortex, one from Huddersfield, the contemporary music festival, a composer... And, then a guy called Peter Meanwell, who is the new director of the Borealis Festival in Bergen, but who is based here, and who you know really has Norway on his radar... Then you have a group of people that presumably have a great interest in each other. Well, one always tends to think, do they really want to come, all these important people?, but they do. They usually do.

According to the informant, this networking strategy both gives access to important professional networks, but also strengthens the professional legitimacy of the diplomacy:

Another aspect, in terms of my own position, is that as I start meeting these people around London, places where I go myself, it gives cred. That is, I think, positive. Because, then they see that it's not just about selling in Norway, it is actually about trying to participate, and being honestly interested in the field.

When asked about whether this means that it does not give cred to be a representative of the Norwegian Foreign Service, the informant exclaims, "Oh yes... Yes, it's funny that

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<sup>71</sup> A Norwegian Jazz band (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supersilent>).

<sup>72</sup> A Norwegian Jazz musician ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arve\\_Henriksen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arve_Henriksen)).

I always think the other way around, that it gives cred to be able to know something about the field.” Nevertheless, this strategy, to just try to be an active and competent member of an art scene, often does not actively promote any particular (Norwegian official) agenda at all, is one that is widely acted out and reported among the informants in the empirical material.

In a previous chapter, the analysis centers on how the arts are utilized in order to make different types of (both specific and more general) brands. The idea was that such brands took forms of narrations about Norway that would create general perceptions about “us” as particularly creative, innovative, quality-oriented, genuine, etc. In this work, networking that involves the diplomacy in a wide sense, i.e. agents from a range of relevant institutions and levels that team up in partnerships with specific entrepreneurial characteristics are crucial, something a lengthy excerpt from one interview shows. The interview involved a representative of the film industry explaining how Norway is “sold” as a theme- or special-profile country at festivals and expos:

**R:** Is the profile-country status something you work with actively?

**I:** Yes, sometimes. Sometimes we want that. As a strategy within that respective territory, to become visible in that country.

**R:** Is the MFA in on this work?

**I:** No.

**R:** The diplomacy?

**I:** Not in the phase where we decide on whether to do it or not, but if we decide on doing it, sure they will be contacted. Like this event, we’ll be doing at the MIPCOM, which is a TV expo in Cannes in October. The first thing I did having decided on that was to call the Embassy in Paris asking them – we have been in contact with them about this before – if they wanted to join in. To join in with financial support and bring people that could be interesting to have at that reception. And our Paris contacts say it is very interesting to them if people come from the embassy, and the ambassador comes, and they get a VIP reception, picking them up at the airport, etc. etc. I think festivals are used to that, that some countries do stuff like that with their diplomacy. But I guess, not everybody can... Everybody can’t buy their way in... like we did in New York, bought our way into a breakfast. We bought a breakfast, kind of. Well, that’s just some of the things we do...

**R:** Breakfast, at?...

**I:** At Kidscreen, which is a conference for children’s television. We made a breakfast for special invitees. Among the delegates. And now we try to get into the MIP’s official program, where we either get a breakfast or a sort of late night cocktail party, where we get to show a range of our coming productions, lift up our producers, etc. That is with the embassy. And, perhaps we get these Norwegian artists to come and sing, or... that’s what we sometimes did in Berlin, making it more grand. And Innovation Norway brings food... There are lots of possibilities. For a wider cooperation.

**R:** Have you had success?

**I:** It works. Sure, it works. Both making contacts, building networks, and that, right. The producers meeting important people, our productions advancing, and, also to lift up Norway. That is, our aim, our overarching aim, is that Norway is the best in the world in making children’s television. Child content. That’s what we are going to sell. And all the producers know that. They are not selling

Elleville Elfrid or Albert Åberg<sup>73</sup> as such – well, that too – but what sustains this, when we do it together like this, is the brand Norway, plain and simple.

The transcription illustrates the way that the diplomacy gets involved in the work mode in which different partners are put together in strategically favorable groups, in settings that open for an efficient promotion of Norwegian interests and products in both a narrow and a wider sense. According to the informant, effects in a narrow sense relate to selling an actual product, while broader effects concern groups of products (like Norwegian children's TV productions) or even the blurred field of Norwegianness (Norway as a brand, indicating an interaction between artistic expressions or cultural products and a broad cultural superstructure).

A closely related aspect of the socializing mode of diplomacy, one that, e.g. is an important part of receptions and breakfast meetings like the ones described above, is networking. The question is in what ways does the diplomacy practice this work form?

The perhaps most important, and definitely the most time-consuming part of the job as a cultural diplomat, is to establish, nurse and expand professional networks. Their importance relates to a number of things, such as generating projects, expert and media travels, and as a valuable source of professional advice when priorities and plans are made. Networks are nourished in many ways and at many sites, from just being out on the town, getting updated on cutting edge works or projects, to organizing and arranging network parties, meetings, dinners or conferences at the Foreign Service mission, residence or just at some club or art scene. One Paris-based informant in the diplomacy explains some of the network dynamics, e.g. in how new relationships and project cooperation evolve. Accompanying an expert visit to the opening of the *Europe Europe* exhibition at the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art in Oslo, it turns out that:

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<sup>73</sup> Elleville Elfrid [Ella Bella Bingo] and Albert Åberg [Alfie Atkins] are both pre-school animated TV series.

that was the starting point of a major cooperation. And, it's all connected, right... You make some new contacts and it turns out that they know the director at the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art because of and that that person knows that and that and that...

An informant at the embassy in London asserts:

Of course, we have a lot of contacts in the professional area, right, and we have a number of key people that we know, because we have been working with them before or because they are particularly interested in Norway, things like that... And, if we wonder about things, right... the Cheltenham Festival, is it that important? How important is it that we get involved in that?... Sometimes you don't know. Of course, we have colleagues here that know the field well, and who perhaps know, but often, the best option is to ask local professionals here. If the advisor organizations at home don't know... because, they couldn't possibly know every event in every country, right... It could be small things that are up and coming...

A staff at the New York Consulate General explains:

There is an important organization here called Van Alen, which works with architecture and design, questions on urbanism, things like that. We have a very good relationship with the director, who used to work at the Guggenheim Museum; we have been working with him for about four years. He made contact with us, wanting to be teamed up with a Norwegian institution, in order to develop his program for the coming winter. That is, typically, a project where we work in order to facilitate for him to meet someone in Norway. Then they together have to agree on whether to engage in a project, and then perhaps send us an application for some support, etc. That project could typically become part of our local operational plan and part of our application to the MFA at home. However, it is initiated from outside. Of course, it is initiated from outside, but it is also the result of a network that we have been maintaining over several years. We first sent him to Norway in 2009, I think.

One of the MFA's strategic approaches to cultural policy is to emphasize long-term relationships and quality partners over short-term- and ad hoc-oriented cooperation. This approach is found in how the missions produce their operational plans, particularly with an emphasis on network contacts. One informant says that the home office has requested extremely concrete applications and plans in terms of target groups: "They want us to be specific down to the name of contacts; the director of Institute of Contemporary Art, right, the editor of Wall Paper..." Also, another informant stresses the strategy of giving some contacts priority over others. Telling about the different networking that took place as Øyvind Hjelman's photo exhibition in Paris came to life, the informant touches on the art of network management:

We have contact with a vast amount of people. When someone is taking part in an exhibition, first we have contact with the gallery and the curator, if they are not identical. Sometimes they are from the same organization, sometimes from separate ones. For example, at Mois de la Photo, the institution that is behind it, La Maison Européenne de la Photographie, they have invited a curator called Jean-Louis Pinte who in turn has chosen to exhibit Øyvind Hjelman as a part of Mois de la Photo. Then we have contact with everybody involved, and we are central here because we funded the project and have a partnership with the showcase site about the opening ceremony... So then, I have contact with everybody, from the artistic responsible, the ones that organizes, the curator, and

all the way down to the tiniest detail... you know, organizing how many glasses of champagne are to be served, and it's very diverse. Other projects, it's not that diverse, but I have tried to meet most of our co-operating partners, even though, unfortunately, I haven't had time to meet with all of them. Because, some are prioritized over others... projects that are prioritized, resulting in some contacts being somewhat neglected. But I have tried to maintain frequent contact with people, if not face to face, at least by phone. Calling people. If you have a question or need advice about something, and then it develops. Those talks never take three minutes, you know.

This means that an important skill that the diplomacy has to have is to be able to balance both giving priority to selected projects and partnerships, and to be sensitive to new, interesting and potentially fruitful partnerships. As asserted by the informant above, staying out, just attending clubs, concerts, exhibitions, fashion shows, literary evenings, parties, dinners... it is an important part of keeping up to date. However, it also has the capacity to blur the focus of a Foreign Service mission operational plan. That is why operational plans setting limitations to how far one may go with such new and sometimes surely promising contacts are always found at the missions. Consequently, the missions have plans and priorities they follow, e.g. specializing in certain art fields (like literature or design and architecture). Such priorities are a result of both strategic and pragmatic causes. Firstly, it follows up present policies signaled by the MFA at home, and often on a concrete level as to what is signaled by the Foreign Minister. As asserted by many of the diplomacy informants, plans have to be in line with current foreign cultural policies. Priorities also have to do with the interest and competence at the mission. Because the staff members here are also executive bureaucrats, in the meaning of handling concrete cases, their personal competence to some degree will influence on what profile the mission holds. Some focus on design and visual arts, whereas others focus more on music and performing arts. However, and perhaps most importantly, according to the informants, the missions keep an open mind and ear to needs articulated from Norwegian interests, like institutions or special priorities and efforts planned by the advisor organizations (who again make such priorities and plans in cooperation with their partners and members).

The promotional part of the job for the diplomacy thus mostly takes place at the request or initiative from the art sector at home, particularly, but not only, from the advisor organizations. This work also relates closely to the expert and media visits that local

agents take to sites where Norwegian art and artists are showcased. However, being initiated from Norway, it still takes place in close cooperation with local players, often described as the *tripartite* partnership or cooperation. For example, as one informant explains, such promotional initiatives may be aimed at adjusting a local taste in Norwegian performing arts in Britain:

When it comes to theater, the British audience loves theater, but prefer a rather traditional repertoire. Still, now we work with a group of young theater people that are very interested in Norwegian contemporary dramatists. We contribute to work that up. And, it's going to be exciting to see, the last plays staged at the Barbican have actually been sort of modern, avant-garde productions. And they have received very fine critiques. To take the Peoples Enemy that the Schaubühne Berlin did, it was a guest play, non-British; it received very, very good reviews in the newspapers. So maybe the time has come. But, in terms of performing arts, the audiences have been extremely traditional. We hope to be working with young... to get in, well, people like Arne Lygre, and Fredrik Brattberg, and several other young, contemporary dramatists that I see are doing a very fine job, and that could succeed here.

Operating within highly specialized professional networks comes with the risk of those networks taking the form of a (more or less) closed clique, consisting of a careful selection of bureaucrats, diplomats, cultural workers, institutional directors, curators and extinguished artists; a family where everybody meets frequently in a never-ending loop of receptions, art events and networking get-togethers. In her analyses of the contemporary art world, the French art sociologist Moulin (1992, in Mangset 2004) argues that the breakdown in hierarchies and institutions within the field has opened for a vertical integration of power, leaving the important power of definition to a small number of curators, art dealers and critics. Based on the empirical data from this study, such elitist networks are exactly the ones that the diplomacy seems to work to enter or integrate with their own. This finding corresponds with Mangset's findings in his 1997 study, in which he vividly describes exactly such semi-closed groups with specifics, though partly excluding structures and flows. In terms of questions of whether such elitist, excluding networks exist and, if they do, to what extent they are unfortunate, the empirical material is not conclusive. On the one hand, it describes a practice that resembles a snowball methodology, where one contact leads to another, and where interesting people are included in an open-minded manner. On the other hand, it also indicates that the MFA, in synch with the needs of the advisor organizations, maintains

a strict strategical guiding of whom to make partnerships with, with a preference for representatives of high-quality and status institutions and long-term prospects.

One informant, coming from the architecture and design sector, answered the question on broad or confined networks with a counter-question: “Were you at the MFA dinner at the Ekebergrestauranten restaurant?” As I said no, the informant continues, “It’s a difficult question... No, it’s not an extremely closed network, because many of these bureaucrats are replaced on a regular basis.” However, the informant continues, “At the Foreign Service missions for example [...] internally in the MFA, the same people are in constant circulation.” When asked whether the same was the case for art field representatives and artists, that it could sometimes become somewhat family-like, the Norwegian international art family, the answer was:

Well... I guess, yes. But, in terms of artists, they are changing. It’s not like we use the same architects every single time. We try to include new ones. But, then you have the bureaucrats or the advisor organizations [...] well, there are some recurrences there. But, I wouldn’t say a closed clique; I wouldn’t say, or a protectionist clique.

This description, which corresponds well to my own observations from my fieldwork, suggests a network of recurring executive agents administering a changing field of art and artists, similar to Moulin’s theory of art world hierarchies. From the inside it is not seen as closed or confined, as to some degree it is open to new members, preferably to those similar to the ones already there. Also, because the international art world is the target group, the principal number of people interesting to include in the network is still quite large. However, the profile of such networks is still not dependent on one or only a few people, but on what agents are not included. Here, the data suggest that the diplomatic flow is not as representative of the broad Norwegian art scene as one sometimes gets the impression of. In order to illustrate how art and artist selections take place, the informant further stated:

For example, last year I was in London to curate a contribution to London Architecture Week, the Architecture Festival. And perhaps, other people would have made different selections... and it’s important to keep a variety, to highlight the best we have to offer, but it is, at the same time, natural to use, e.g. Snøhetta for all it is worth. Because that is a kind of a national trademark, they shouldn’t be excluded from principal causes.

The principal causes the informant refers to are perhaps attempts to restrict frequently used artists from being selected for prestigious international work in order to stimulate a more diverse selection. It could also be regulations stated to prevent the foreign cultural policy discourse from being too dependent on certain networks. A recurring critique within several evaluations of the advisor organizations (particularly within the field of contemporary arts) has been an overly elitist or one-dimensional approach to art and artist selections (Berkaak 2004, Røyseng and Haugsevje 2013). This echoes Mangset's findings from 1997, displaying "a real 'battlefield' of (both manifest and latent) conflicting values, ideologies and interests," concerning, e.g.:

...priorities within the field of international cultural co-operation, between different segments or subsystems of Norwegian cultural life, for instance between an elitist institution like the Museum of Contemporary Arts and a corporative institution like the professional organisation for visual artists. (Mangset 1997: 86)

In one of the interviews, an informant who is working at one of the major Foreign Service missions touches on this topic.

I understand that we are requested to prioritize. To not sit with like a thousand small projects, but rather to think through why we work with what partners and perhaps rather to have to focus on a few. Because there is a challenge that I think many Foreign Service missions face, there is a whole lot of small matters that pop up all the time, that... well, Norwegian, right... Some Norwegian painter that perhaps has rented a gallery, hoping to... coming to the Foreign Service mission. That is when we check with the advisor organizations back home, right, who is this? Is it someone we should prioritize? Trying to... well, focus on things that could have a real effect.

With reference to periodical meetings at the Section for Cultural Affairs, the informant asserts that this is a much-debated issue among the gathered diplomatic staff, and one where there is room for discussions guided by local needs more than clear-cut instructions from the MFA. Even though many informants stress the principle that external expert committees make the selections based on what is in local demand, it is not certain that these selections are as independent as often thought. This is because they are made within the limits of the discourse, and thus discursively produced. As asserted by Milliken (1999), Lähdesmäki (2011) and others, what often characterizes such discursive production is its capacity of portraying such selections as rational. Of course, they may be controversial, contested and even condemned, but they still do not



cause a breach with the fundamental conventions, the rules of the game. In the case of foreign cultural policy, this convention seems to be quality: the “best we have to offer.”

### 9.1.2 The invisible hand

The perhaps most evident result of the decentralization of power from the MFA to the art field is a striking consciousness among the MFA’s staff to leave art and artist priorities and selections to authorities outside of the MFA. A central mode of the diplomacy’s work with the arts is hence *not* to interfere in artistic decision-making, but to contribute to the field as a *facilitator*. At the same time as the facilitation term signals a passive, non-interfering position or role, it also indicates something active, as one gets something (important) done. In a foreign cultural policy discourse, both positions make sense in their own meaning. Active organizing, getting the right people to meet, seeing to it that Norwegian arts professionals or the artists themselves meet new audiences or artistic realms, or that foreign agents, producers, curators, arts buyers of every kind get to meet the exact right Norwegian counterpart, which perfectly fits the comprehension of a hectic, turbulent, pulsating international art discourse; even more so, this often occurs in one of the great cultural cities of New York, Berlin, London or Paris. Within this comprehension, the hero-story in the diplomacy is an important component. On the other hand, facilitation denotes a passive position, indeed taking care of important aspects of seeing successful international cooperation projects through, however without making any of the executive decisions that lead to bringing the actual project about. Those decisions are to be taken by either Norwegian art interests seeking international markets for their art or cooperation on an individual, organizational or institutional basis, or local partners with an outspoken interest in Norwegian art or artists. One senior diplomat refers to diplomatic work as being *an invisible hand* that produces results favorable to the different interests involved. This need for discretion obviously has its roots in a practicing of the arm’s length principle, but also in a diplomatic discourse emphasizing discreet engagement as part of a generic protocol. Finally, it can be explained in terms of a factual increase in interest from local players and a similar and assumedly interrelated increase in competence among the Norwegian

actors – artists, cultural workers and institutions. This situation, as pointed out by one of the informants, of course also makes it much easier to base the diplomatic practice on external demands and desires, instead of a proactive diplomatic agenda.

As displayed in the previous chapter, there is sometimes a striking servility within the Foreign Service towards the arts in terms of a worry that their involvement in projects is interpreted as an attempt to score instrumental goals. One example here was the New York Consulate General's involvement in MoMA and Printed Matter's New York Art Book Fair, in which the worry was that a special *Norway Focus*, with a separate Norway Room at the gallery PS1, more than a promotion of the individual artists, could be seen as an attempt to promote Norway more generally. Consequently, in interviews, informants from the diplomatic corps routinely assured that they never made decisions concerning what projects or artists to include in the MFA's operational plans and framework: "It's not for us to decide!" One informant, a high-ranking diplomat, asserted "That is very important. We do not decide what art that is to be presented here. We only facilitate for it to happen, for them to see what we have. [...] We all agree on this. Totally agree." Another, also a high-ranking diplomat, stated:

I would say that almost everything that we do here is a response to external processes. Some of those, again, are reactions to some expert travel or a media visit that we arranged, and that is something we started, but everything else happens in a close dialogue with the advisor organizations and local institutions here. So if we do more on music for, example, next year, it is because Music Norway and local partners here are cooperating. As I hope you have seen as you have spent time here, we do not initiate anything on our own. We are not organizing concerts or festivals or exhibitions or anything... We don't decide here at the mission on what areas to prioritize or what projects to work with, without being in dialogue with others. Those are external decisions.

When asked about mission priorities in the case of art forms, why design and architecture and contemporary art were those priorities, an informant at the NY Consulate General answered:

The starting point is a local interest. We would not be working with this, had it not been a demand and an interest among leading institutions in New York. We do almost nothing here that isn't anchored that way. And there, a quite evident change of the practice took place a few years ago. Changing the perspective from addressing Norway, asking, who has an interest to export art? Then I'm not talking in terms of money... -To promote their things in New York? And then to try to do something with that, towards... building networks here and then to pick up on what institutions and people *here* want to do with Norwegian institutions or actors.

A mission staff member, who came to the job from a position in the art field, said:

Like many others, before I came here I thought of the Foreign Service's cultural policy as an effort to help artists that came here with a desire to "do something". Pretty soon I learned that, well, they do, but they do it by supporting people here that take an interest in Norwegian art and artists. That is, they support the local actors, not the Norwegian. So, from being skeptical to how the authorities are supposed to support something that has this very uncertain prospect of success..., the organization I got to learn is much more professional. Much more thought through. And, they operate on so many more levels than just allocating financial support. It's more about finding really good partners, to follow-up projects over time, to think in long-term relationships.

It is particularly interesting how this latter informant draws a link between a demand-based work mode, where the main emphasis is on local rather than Norwegian actors, and professionalism. To stay hands-off is to be professional. Another informant, a top diplomat asserts the same:

Just the fact that we are working with culture the way we are, that we act in accordance with the advisor organizations, that is indeed the professional component in what we do, right. That we do not sit here and have a lot of meanings about everything, but actually listen to the ones that know what they are talking about. [...] So I think it is important to stick to... that we all agree on that what is important is to serve the cultural institutions and advisor organizations, that is where we can be highly professional, that is our guiding star in our work here.

A clear impression from the fieldwork and the interviews is that most of the informants share this view. A further clear impression is that this attitude is largely based on the argument that the diplomats should not let their personal preferences come to show in their work. One diplomat states this clearly, saying, "And what is important then, is for me not to sit and... Oh, this and that Norwegian architect, for example, is so exciting; I have to do something to help him or her. That would be completely wrong, right. Then I would not understand my role." This clearly relates to the competence question or, rather, conflict in the years prior to the MFA decentralization (cf. Mangset 1997). At that time, at least according to many art professionals, diplomats with a wholehearted, though superficial flair for the arts, were often the ones deciding on which art and artists were to be promoted abroad. Some diplomatic darlings, according to the critics more suited to serve foreign than cultural policy aims, were consequently given the all but flattering label of being *diplomatic art* (ibid.).

Still, a hands-off focus of course has the bias that it downplays the Foreign Service staff's professional art competence, something that in some cases may cause a feeling of

incapacitation. One informant who holds a leading position in the Foreign Service described it in this way:

What some at the beginning did not agree upon is what I said about us not being professionals. Or rather, we are not *art* professionals. So we had this little discussion about what it means to be an art professional. And in my opinion... well, one may have the professional art training or education that one has, but here it is important that it doesn't come to a show publicly. We are bureaucrats. We are facilitators. It is not for us to decide what... No matter preferring this or that or this or that. We have to have that arm's length distance that I bet you have heard about a thousand times.

This illustrates an interesting situation and dilemma. As an increased number of diplomatic staff are local employees, and these have often been recruited from positions within the art field, as they are more likely to have personal interests in the executive work, something they are instructed not to have.

A potential dilemma for the diplomacy concerning their facilitator role – being the invisible hand – is that they could in fact become *too* invisible. A senior diplomat relates this problem to the general engagement character and work mode of foreign policy:

...we met with the director of a museum here the other day, to refresh their interest in Norway. The museum curators know about Norway, we have sent them on expert visits to Norway, but it is of course important for us keep the interest alive, to tell more about what is happening, to get to know the director better, to familiarize more with her interests. Then we can connect her to institutions at home. Then, you know... slowly, piece by piece you build these relations, and we maintain them. But by then it is not that important for us to be part, as long as these interests find each other. And that is how it is, I guess, with engagement politics. A large part of the MFA is... We are not in the front, in Columbia... The parties there, negotiating peace... We are there to facilitate.

As discussed earlier, in terms of a general dilemma related to the MFA working for Norwegian interests in an area where national representation is of less concern to the arts than to the authorities supporting them, this resembles a similar but more specific problem. Like the informant claims, diplomacy is supposed to participate in the early stages of operations, being the one that makes things happen, successes to occur, however without anybody being able to pin down that effort to the ministry or diplomacy per se. Hence, the diplomat asserts, "What I sometimes wonder is whether this is smart for the mission over time. And that is why it is so important to keep telling back home all the time what we do and how we do it." Because the focus is so much on the arts, the artists, the local art organizations and institutions, what then about the service responsible for the result? How do they maintain legitimacy, both within the

political sphere and the art world? One example that illustrates this relates to the effort for Norwegian literature and contemporary writers in the U.S. Here, Norwegian authorities in general and the MFA in particular, were criticized for a lack of interest and support in the Norwegian-American Literature Festival, started by the Norwegian publishing agent Frode Saugestad, which became a huge success seemingly totally without the help of official Norway. The only thing was that the festival and much of the appurtenant program that spun off it was indeed the result of a long-term work of the Consulate General in New York, still without this having reached the Norwegian discourse.

One informant relates the facilitator mode to the difference between foreign policy and foreign cultural policy, in which diplomats working with security policies or economy reports back home proclaim official Norwegian positions in different issues and areas:

... we don't have like an official proclamation about Norwegian foreign cultural policy. It is more about the art and the artists. We are only the messengers, right. The mediators in a way... and I'm thinking, the Øya Festival, how am I supposed to tell people here about that? Like that? Then I rather make them go there, right, so they can see it.

Others emphasize aspects that are more pragmatic, for example, that history has proven local (mission) initiatives and attempts to organize or curate promotional events with Norwegian art or artists to be failures, in terms of a dubious quality and difficulties with establishing reliable effects from the event (cf. Mangset 1997). One of the informants, a locally employed staff member, seems to have come to terms with this insight, saying, "Here, for us to organize things, it just does not work." Rather, local actors should initiate such work, thus: "What you have to do is to connect to local festivals, venues, publishers, etc. To work with institutions, that already is a part of the local cultural scene. And I have a clear impression that that is what the MFA wants too, right."

An excerpt from the field notes illustrates this:

Very fun lunch today, with all of the staff present. As a rule, these two weeks I have been here, the culture staff (with the exception of the trainees and the media advisor) has not had lunch in the consulate. They probably have had their own lunch arrangements, I presume. Suddenly, lots of internal MFA humor and stories about all the crazy things and requests that Foreign Service missions have to deal with, Norwegians abroad, etc., popped up. We had a good laugh at the American who had made contact with the media advisor with a neatly handwritten letter, who wanted to buy a not

too big farm in Norway with room for one or two cows and about 10 sheep. Nevertheless, more relevant, the discussion turned towards cultural initiatives. It began with a discussion about the former efforts in Central park, with the Grete Waitz races, an event where the “big drum” was played to present Norway. Everyone agreed that it was good that this was terminated; it was too expensive and had no measurable effect. One of the diplomats said something about Sweden still doing this in Battery Park on the Swedish Flag Day, gathering 6,000 people, but as she said, without any strategic knowledge of the audience, who they are, etc. Hence, she asserted, it was a waste of money. Another diplomat followed up by saying that the world has changed and so did the MFA. It was interesting to hear how everybody fully agreed on this, how hopeless they thought the Swedes’ plans and strategies in this field were, and how satisfied they were with their own, which they consequently regarded as far more modern and sophisticated. One diplomat with long experience from the service claimed that it was all wrong for the MFA to engage in national day celebrations abroad. Norwegian taxpayers should not pay for Norwegians getting drunk at the MFA’s expense, she said, with an extenuating expression; well, to express myself to the point, she added. The consul then added that the MFA perhaps has to accept that they operate a number of roles and that they need to balance these, however with as few resources as possible for these kind of things. (Field log 4, note 13)

It is interesting here that the MFA compares with the Swedish practice. In most areas of foreign cultural policy, Norwegians have a *look to Sweden* attitude, particularly within cultural industry and export, in which the Swedes have had considerable success (cf. Johansson (2010), about the ABBA wonder). Thus, it could mean here that the Norwegian diplomacy feels that it has the better strategy. Where the Swedish approach still engages in mass communication, the Norwegian turns towards specialized groups and communities. Of course, this could also support that the Norwegian approach intentionally is more elitist, a claim that is central to this thesis.

According to the empirical material, the attitude found at the New York Consulate General, namely that it would be wrong for the diplomacy to initiate or organize events or other arrangements meant to promote Norwegian art and artists, is one of a much more general character. Several other informants joined in on what the NY consul asserted about balancing different roles. One explained:

We can be quite proactive, if we work things right. Of course, within the [general] policy field, the diplomacy is much, much more reactive; in cases of bigger, world incidents and... it’s harder to make long-term plans. [At the cultural section] we can do that, but at the same time, we need the flexibility that allows us to take opportunities when they arise, and we do it all the time. So, it’s a balance between having thought through a year in advance and made plans, and at the same time being open to everything changing. And just that balance between being active... we’re in a way a listening post here, right, to the ones back home. Figuring out what is moving at the different scenes, what actors and institutions that are relevant. And then to make sure that they have knowledge about Norway and the Norwegian institutions and actors and... what is going on at home. And that is networking par excellence, here. [...] It is a lot of, like... keeping relations warm, to make sure that the network is constantly expanded, just to actively make sure that the ones that are relevant within the different institutions are aware of Norway and, so to say, have their eyes directed towards Norway and on Norwegian actors. And at the same time not be the one organizing

the exhibition, right, that would be completely wrong. So, to find just that balance between connecting people and be... that things should proceed on its own. But they don't do that without us, kind of... knowing whom to connect. (Laughs) In a way.

According to this informant, the aim of the diplomatic work is to initiate contact, then to let the parties continue on their own, without further intervention from the Foreign Service. Still, the former takes a certain form of skill and knowledge, one has to know with whom to connect, something that involves some degree of active initiative making. The informant therefore asserts that to find the right balance between involvement and keeping a distance is very much at the crux of the engagement. As noted several times, the Foreign Service, as the operational branch of the MFA, is central to Norwegian external cultural policy as it exceeds the ordinary administrative, bureaucratic work of any other ministry, extending itself out on the streets, working hands on with projects. At the same time, current practice favors a hands-off work mode, at least in situations where executive decisions are made. Hence, by its very nature, the Foreign Service challenges the arm's length distance that is supposed to stay between professional judgements in questions about the arts and the responsible ministry. The important thing, presumably, just like the informant above claims, is to find the right balance between when to keep hands on and when to keep them off. This is a demanding task, but of course also just at the very heart of the diplomacy as a mediator between contradicting interests and arguments, a negotiator of opposing discourses.

Despite the fact that the missions mostly act in accordance with the needs and desires of both the MFA home office and the art world (both at home and locally), which in most cases are overlapping, the missions still have some leeway to implement and also adopt projects to local needs. As previously mentioned, this also involves the Foreign Service missions having some local funding for their cultural activities, allocated after a process of producing and having approved (by the home office) a local operational plan. One informant from the diplomacy describes this leeway as a "safety valve." Mostly, such initiatives are relatively limited, in the form of local adaptations of the broader foreign cultural policy profile, but they are also found as adjustments of a more comprehensive character. Rather than making use of the organizations' advice, when asked whether the

different missions have such an agenda of their own, a representative of one of the advisor organizations answers, “Well... hmm... some of them do. And, some are running their own races. Which is good too!”

The informant, displaying a noticeably pragmatic attitude to what apparently are cracks in the arm’s length principle, at least in remote and presumably less important Foreign Service missions, here points to a very interesting aspect of the cultural policy of the diplomacy. It is a fact that the diplomacy does not always keep the arm’s length distance from executive decision-making it claims, and which is stated so clearly in the policy documents on which they base their operations. There are a number of reasons for this, many already accounted for in the previous chapters. An answer that is close would of course be that such breaches or cracks relate to instrumental aims overriding the ones related to cultural policy.

On the other hand, the focus here will be on the reasons that for one relate to the actual distance, both literally and figuratively speaking, that exists between many of the missions and the home institutions they are supposed to cooperate with (and comply to). Two, the principally activist or operational character of diplomatic work, and three, a claim that the diplomacy relates to a broadened, entrepreneurial work mode found at the most important missions in terms of cultural policy, where the borders between the art world and official executive decisions and assessments are blurred or dissolved.

Firstly, assumedly, in many cases where the diplomacy seems to operate with an autonomous agenda, the reason for this relates closely to the shared distance to the Norwegian discourse. According to several of the informants, this distance could be seen both in terms of the actual distance from home and in terms of being in a local context, in which art or cultural matters by both the Foreign Service and the Norwegian art field are seen as being of little interest. For example, a diplomat with appointments to several Foreign Service missions asserts:

Well, during my appointment in Hanoi, there, I did not have anything to do with arts or culture, however, we did have some tiny funding for culture there too. Nevertheless, it’s not as if we ever used the advisor organizations, we didn’t even know that it was an option. Perhaps, this is some



years ago, so perhaps this has changed, but I think it still... there's probably some room for improvement at the smaller missions.

According to this informant, the lack of communication with the Norwegian art world is a situation in need of improvement, hence as a flaw rather than an intentional act, for example to promote foreign policy rather than cultural policy aims.

Distance in this context also has a definition by extension. As the informant above indicates, many Foreign Service missions have so little funding and so few staff resources for cultural activities that this activity resumes almost to nothing. In these territories, cultural policy practice often suffers more from a lack of competence than from deliberate infringements to the arm's length principle. One informant, for example, tells about an architecture exhibition that travels the world from one country and one Foreign Service mission to the next. It is, according to the informant, a *light version* of an exhibition, as it is short of the standards that would be preferred by the architectural discourse at home. Consequently, while popular among the Foreign Service, the travel exhibition meets skepticism both from this informant and among a more general professional architectural community at home. However, the informant says that a more professionally designed and equipped exhibition would probably never have worked, as it would be impossible for the diplomatic apparatus to operate adequately. The design that is actually travelling is therefore a compromise, the least common denominator of two worlds.

The distance from an internal, Norwegian art or cultural policy discourse is also reflected in a concrete way; in some contexts, social or religious conditions, whether one likes it or not, do not allow for all types of artistic display. As some diplomats argue strongly in favor of culture and art as relatively neutral sites for intercultural, equal footing meetings, they also underscore its potential as source of misconceptions and conflict, with the recent Mohamed cartoon controversy as one example. For this reason, not all art is appropriate at all times in all contexts. Freedom of expression and speech are context-sensitive, and not always worth a principal fight, is the argument. At the same time, an important aspect of the autonomy of the arts is to operate somewhat

independently of contextual limitations. Consequently, there will be room for the different parties to find the right balance between the arts' possibility to express themselves relatively freely and the need for an adaption to local customs.

A different form of local adaptations relates to what some informants refer to as a relative autonomy of the Foreign Service, i.e. various local needs for operational space in order to maintain the diplomacy's dynamic character. According to them, such needs are, e.g. room for a more or less autonomous operationalization or implementation of overarching aims or priorities, ones that are perhaps principally based on local demands and domestic art world requirements. Hence, while following operational plans, there still has to be space for individual Foreign Service personnel to act on his or her own personal experience. In an applied research report on the attitude towards- and practicing of cultural policy within Norwegian diplomacy (Hylland and Berge 2012), a predominant number of the responding diplomats said they felt it as a relief that art and culture priorities and quality assessments were taken mostly externally. For example, by external committees (like travel support) or advisor organizations (like advice for other questions that come up), many felt they would not have had the competence to decide on these questions. Similarly, at the field stays, I got a clear impression that the plans and framework made at the Foreign Service missions were anchored both in central MFA policies and in priorities put down by the advisor organizations. At the same time, as indicated above, to some extent the diplomacy also has its own agenda. Sometimes they need to, and do make use of their own local knowledge, letting them respond swiftly to local contexts, even when incompatible with the wants and needs of the Norwegian art world. Here, it is easy to underestimate all the small decisions that are made every day, where it would be impossible to bring in external advice or to relate to overarching guidelines, and thus just as well are based on local context and/or the diplomat's gut feeling. As a result, at some point the individual skills of the diplomat, the discourse he or she is guided by and the subject position he or she is taking on will influence on how different interests are ensured.

The balancing of a hands-on and a hands-off work mode obviously opens some room for what Milliken refers to as a *play of practice*. Such a play, she asserts, departs from “[...] all discourses as being unstable grids, requiring work to ‘articulate’ and ‘rearticulate’ their knowledges and identities (to fix the ‘regime of truth’) and open-ended meshes, making discourses changeable and in fact historically contingent” (1999: 230). The play of practice thus refers to the process of establishing and maintaining/defending specific regimes of truths, values and knowledges held by specific interests in specific contexts. It will always be difficult to define just the right amount of agency a local institutional (Foreign Service missions) or individual (diplomats) agent should have in a particular operation. That leaves it as a simple task, through practice, to negotiate one’s capacity to act, e.g. in accordance with local needs or agendas more than central policies. One interesting example is the way that the active part of the facilitator role is euphemized in order to underscore the focus on the arm’s length distance between executive power at home and the diplomacy’s operations locally. Of particular interest here is how activity is said to be a response to local demand, a demand that in many cases is created by the local diplomacy itself, either through comprehensive networking or an extensive use of expert and media visits. The diplomat’s role in how local demand is evoked and initiated is thus not to be underestimated. As we see from the empirical data, such an active role is by no means denied. Instead, it is not talked about so much. Yet, both as a much-needed part of legitimizing the diplomacy’s role, as a part of operating within an entrepreneurial fellowship of cross-over art and cultural agents, and finally as a part of adapting to local conditions, to actively initiate and engage in projects is an important part of the diplomacy’s dynamic work mode. This role and form of activeness has rightly changed since the 1990s’ allegations of Foreign Service obstinacy and incompetence, but that does not change the fact that such a role exists.

So, when diplomats are referring to a Norwegian act as an answer to a local (international) demand, it is often the finalization of a project that was initially started by themselves. When Knausgård had a success in NY, the Consulate General had been working with this for years. Probably in cooperation with NORLA, but there is no doubt

that this also has to do with the dedication of central employees at the mission. The demand that local employees or the national government is referring to as they send Norwegian art and artists abroad is often indeed a demand created by themselves. This formula is something we know about from an economic discourse, but deviates quite a bit from the intentions of the international arts exchange and cooperation, especially as it was practiced 10 or 20 years ago. Again, I think this is an example of how the Norwegian foreign cultural policy discourse has been professionalized, i.e. turned in a direction favoring professionalism and market thinking. In this market thinking, the country of origin has a more important place than in a traditional arts discourse, where borders and provenance have less importance. In marketing a product, the country-of-origin is thought to have importance (White 2012). In particular, this is the working trend today, cf. the local products-ideology sweeping around the Western world, favoring products with a clear image or narrative in the form of a smart formulated history and/or a precise provenance. Assumedly, this relates further to the idea (or perhaps ideology) of ecology and sustainability, two terms that also play significant roles in a general contemporary social discourse. As discussed in the former chapter, a focus on values like naturalness, purity and honesty suits the MFA fine, as it is assumed that a country-of-origin effect can have an impact on the export of products and services. As White (2012) argues, this effect may also work the other way around, i.e. that Norwegian art with a clear provenance may improve the general Norwegian reputation and Norway's reputation as an interesting arts market in particular, an inverse effect of which the government is presumably well aware.

## **9.2 Diplomatic pragmatism**

As the previous sections show, foreign cultural policy and cultural diplomacy inevitably involve a balancing of a number of cultural and foreign policy aims and objectives, considerations and needs. And, this is where the interesting dilemma potentially occurs: cultural policy aims (at least the ones concerning artistic autonomy) are often portrayed in contrast to- or as the opposite of instrumental (foreign) policy aims. As Nisbett asserts, instrumentalism often evokes a polarized discussion, simplifying two terms into

inherently good or bad (2012). In her opinion, such a discussion is a hindrance in seeing the two – in terms of a polar opposite – instead of as a basis for fruitful negotiations over power of definition, moreover one in which the arts are not necessarily the weaker part. Today, the art autonomy-instrumentalism dilemma at first glance represents little conflict in the cultural diplomacy discourse. Presumably, the main reason for this is the increased power ascribed to the art field. The focus has moved away from the instrumental character of foreign policy uses of art to one where the arts now see themselves, probably correctly, as being in the driver's seat in setting the agenda for Norwegian policies within this field. A not very bold claim is that this development has paved the way for an increased and quite productive pragmatism within foreign cultural policy.

Even though instrumental aims remain a central part of the MFA's work, not least in terms of a turn towards more competitive quality-oriented, market-based activities, the fact that art experts now respond to the demand from international institutions and individuals has clearly reduced the focus on this issue. One representative of one of the art organizations advising the MFA in professional art matters (in the field of performing arts) asserts:

In the context of international art cooperation, to us the promotion of Norway as a cultural nation is not something we focus on. We work to secure that the professional sectors we represent, and the practitioners of these sectors, are in a position to expand their operational range. So, the Norwegian flag and the "Norwegian culture" is not so much part of our focus. Our main concern is Norwegian artists. The assessments that are made are not based on traditional Norwegian cultural expressions, or "the Norwegian" – whatever that is – being promoted particularly; rather that we can promote strong and professional artists with products, services and ideas of high quality, that offer substantial social and professional contributions.

This pragmatic view, keeping eyes wide shut to general instrumental aspects of the governmental policy, is widely found in the Norwegian discourse. It is an instructive illustration of how different agents negotiate instrumentalism within the discourse. There should be no doubt that this informant is well aware of the fact that by presenting Norwegian art, the MFA specifically also sees this in a wider strategy of promoting general interests. The choice of keeping a focus on the arts per se then is just that, a choice. As indicated before, the room for such negotiations relates to a sensitivity

towards instrumental uses of the arts having multiple degrees, from reducing the negative impacts of a dubious war effort in Afghanistan (cf. Nisbett 2016) to instrumental aims that are viewed *good and agreed* (cf. Chapter 6.2.3). As the art field gains power over important structures of the field, its need to accentuate instrumental aims as predominately negative is reduced. On that note, the claim that instrumentalism is predominately viewed negatively because it threatens the autonomy of the arts seems viable. The arts accept instrumental aims, as long as they have been stated by the arts themselves.

The pragmatic mode of the art field also finds its counterpart within diplomacy. In an interview, an employee at the Foreign Service mission in New York states:

I think it has been a tradition, at least within the MFA, to work with culture more at an instrumental level. To serve *music to the salmon*. That is the saying used here at the MFA, right. That culture is used to sell in something else; to sell in politics or some sort of product. We don't do that here... That is part of how we tend to see ourselves, what we do and what we don't do. We like to think that we work quite purely with culture as a business. Or, an industry perhaps is a more correct term, the cultural industries.

I find the accentuation of the cultural policy practice at the mission as *pure* to be of interest, since the use of the adjective implies that there at the same time has to be an impure way to work with culture. Here, the impurity signalizes illegitimacy,<sup>74</sup> charging the quote with normative power. This in turn signals that the informant is well aware of the art field aversion against instrumental uses. Simultaneously, the informant has no problem referring to art as a business or an industry. Another informant from the diplomacy (a locally employed staff member) has a similar attitude:

I am very skeptical to culture being an integrated part of other types of work [at the mission]. Because, the way we work with culture here, is that we work to link professional fields. And, to keep a main focus on that, and not having an agenda other than that, I feel is extremely important and the reason why I work here. I have not applied for diplomacy recruitment [aspirantkurset], I am not interested in working at another mission or to work for the MFA in Oslo, I am here only to work specialized with culture at the level that we are at here. So, I would probably not have been interested in a similar position at another mission. Because I would not be working with the same institutions, and would not have had the same rush from back home about being a door opener and

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<sup>74</sup> The use of the term *pure* leads thoughts to Mary Douglas' theories on purity (Douglas 2002).

facilitator as we do here. In my opinion, it is important to cultivate the focus that exists, at least at some missions, on culture, and that we are able to stand for what we do.

As we see it, the integrity of the arts to stand up against an integration of the arts to other agendas is viewed as highly important. Still, it is interesting to see that both these informants acknowledge that instrumental agencies exist in the diplomatic world, and not only at their mission. Also, diplomats choose to keep their eyes wide shut. When asked about the image effect that the arts presumably produces, i.e. the arts' narrative function in the construction of favorable images of Norway and Norwegianness, the informant asserts:

Well, an image effect is always a component in all of the projects that we do. And, not in a vacuum; it is because the actors that we work with themselves are interested in such effects. This is interesting to us because we are supposed to work for the Norwegian reputation in general, and for the reputation of Norwegian arts. The two, I think, are integrated. Interrelated. For example, right now I am cooperating with the IN<sup>75</sup> about a press launch, in which we will promote a Munch/Melgaard exhibition that we are doing together in Oslo. Of course, their press contacts have a more general focus, e.g. tourism, etc. Still, we think it would be interesting if they covered an opening at the Munch Museum. From my professional point of view, the most important thing is to bring in professional media dedicated to the arts. That is what is most important to the Munch Museum. Still, here we work together, taking a more broadminded approach, because the arts are, as you know, many-faceted. Once speaking of Oslo as a destination, we often talk about cultural institutions. We talk about new architecture. That is a part of that same picture.

The view that the arts are many faceted is interesting, pointing in a direction of an arts discourse that is increasingly open to input from neighboring discourses that before were seen a threat to the arts' autonomous position. Perhaps pure and impure is not so easy to distinguish after all. Or, is it rather that this is an example of the discursive play of practice indicated above? At the same time, the latter informant indicates an increasing distance to the MFA, in regard to the work that takes place within a formal Foreign Service context. At the end of the day, important MFA principles and needs will hold precedence. Even though, as stated in the previous sections, professionalism in

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<sup>75</sup> Innovation Norway is, according to their Web page, [www.innovasjon Norge.no/en](http://www.innovasjon Norge.no/en), "the Norwegian Government's most important instrument for innovation and development of Norwegian enterprises and industry." supporting "companies in developing their competitive advantage and to enhance innovation."

cultural diplomacy terms principally relates to acting on the needs of local institutions and the advice from the art field at home:

As long as this is the MFA – the MFA is obviously our mother house, and whom we primarily relate to, because it is where we get our money... – and if there were to arise some kind of disagreement between the advisor organizations and the MFA, there is no doubt in my mind who we would listen to. We would have to listen to the MFA, because... we are an extension of the MFA.

One of the staff member interviews illustrates the pragmatic mode of the cultural diplomacy particularly well. When asked about whether the work is characterized by tensions or conflicts between different interests held by the MFA, the art field, local partners, etc., the diplomacy can sometimes get a bit stuck between a rock and a hard place, the answer was:

No, I haven't... it doesn't strike me. I think it's more, what has been challenging with regard to the advisor organizations is more... from a MFA perspective, their missing mandate or resources to work internationally. We have tried to link them closely to some of the things that happen here, without really having success. And it's not about a lack of good faith at home, it's more about how they operate their respective mandates from the MFA and the Ministry of Culture, and what resources the organizations have in order to work internationally. So it's not necessarily tension, more that it has been, from our point of view, frustrating. Because there are so many opportunities. We see so many opportunities here, that if we were more numerous... working more principally, more professionally, with full backing from the professional field back home, and we need the advisor organizations' help for that, of course... So, it's more like missing opportunities, right.

Thus according to this informant, principal, ideological tensions are not a problem. Instead, a lack of resources is. In his 1997 study, Mangset experienced the same, asserting: "The instrumental mentality, however, does not appear very clearly in the interviews with my informants in the Ministry" (Mangset 1997: 95). His theory was that the informants deliberately downplayed such attitudes in response to an expectation that the researcher shared a "general non-instrumental ethos of cultural life" (ibid.), consequently being biased in disfavor of a foreign affairs rationale. Mangset further bases this argument on a newspaper interview with the former head of the Cultural Division in the Ministry, John Bjørneby, in which the ex-diplomat speaks more freely about his former employer's agenda, i.a. seeing:

...culture in the Foreign Ministry context primarily as an instrument for foreign trade and policy purposes. He appeals to a little more "cynicism" in this work. The main objective, he argues, must be to "market" and "sell the country" by creating a "quality image" of Norway abroad. He dissociates himself from the Nordic 'cultural democratic queue mentality, which implies that if one artist is used in one foreign event, another should be used in the next, etc. Bjørneby also asks for an increased



Norwegian co-operation with “market-oriented experts” of the international impresario and curator type.

As the argument above would suggest, there is no doubt that the MFA today has many of the same instrumental aims with the arts as back in the 1990s when Mangset did his study. Perhaps they are even more outspoken today, as the Ministry feels freer to articulate such aims as long as they are legitimated and qualified by an art field that in most ways is in the driver’s seat. An alternative, or complementary reading, however, would be that the broad diplomacy, the joint group of entrepreneurial agents from the diplomacy, the art world, and business and marketing, is actually operating over discursive borders, making use of the mediating skills of the diplomacy, the field-specific skills of the cultural workers, the business skills of the entrepreneurs, etc. Next, this hypothesis is explored, making use of the analytical concept of entrepreneurship and the subject position of the entrepreneur.

### **9.3 The cultural entrepreneur**

In the former sections, diplomats working with culture are described as both dynamic and pragmatic, features that constitute a climate of ease when cooperating within an increasingly internationalized art world. One way of further understanding these operations comes through seeing them as features of a particular subject position that both enables and constrains how a person in this position engages in cultural policy practice. These entrepreneurs of both the arts and diplomacy exploit personal networks, with a high degree of pragmatism in questions of (previously) underlying tensions, in particular in cases of instrumentalism.

In terms of discourse, an increasingly socially diversified and decentralized (cultural) diplomacy has developed, thereby rearticulating some of the key elements that over time have defined diplomacy and foreign policy as discourse. Some examples are the inclusion of new discursive elements from discourses covering creative industry, sustainability, ecology and social and sociocultural entrepreneurship. As Milliken asserts, discourses are productive in a number of ways. They produce language, i.e. ways

of speaking of and believing in things; they produce practices and they produce sites and objects. Here, she takes on a Foucauldian perspective, holding discourse to be central in producing (and most importantly) *subject positions, informed practices, disciplining places and objects*. Consequently, discourses produce who is at liberty to speak and act and who is to listen and avoid action, what practices are considered rational or moral (ethical), and how places and objects are understood and charged with social and cultural meaning (cf. Foucault 1981, Shapiro 1981, Neumann 2011). Within a discursive approach, the subject position of the entrepreneur resembles a specific configuration of legitimate qualities and dispositions that guide diplomatic agency: how to speak and act, what priorities that make sense to do, what rules – formal and informal – to follow and what actions to take. Such positions come in different shapes and at different levels, but one of the most interesting found in the empirical data bears an interesting resemblance to the cultural *entrepreneur*. Consequently, in the following I suggest that it would be analytically fruitful to see the hero story of the operative diplomacy referred to above as a specific subject position, namely as a cultural (or even a socio-cultural) entrepreneur.

According to Martin and Osberg (2007: 30), the term entrepreneurship “connotes a special, innate ability to sense and act on opportunity, combining out-of-the-box thinking with a unique brand of determination to create or bring about something new to the world.” One informant that I met during the fieldwork in New York, who was in town working for a highly profiled distribution company within the music industry, referred to just these features and qualities – to break out, to dare to think contrary to the majority, to go on hunches, etc. – as “punk”. The informant asserted that a punk attitude often was found within the type of environment that he had come across meeting the Consulate General network in New York, including both diplomats, artists and cultural industry workers of various kinds. Apparently, entrepreneurs (or punks) would prove plentiful within the arts, not to mention the arts business, in which coming up with new ideas and expressions, and breaking with old rules and dogmas, are seen as a central part of the ethos of the practice (Becker 1984, Moulin 1992, Abbing 2002).

Within diplomacy and the Foreign Service, organizations traditionally regarded more risk-averse and cautious (Neumann 2011) entrepreneurial activity in the sense described above may seem as a contradiction in terms. However, in micro-level arenas, like foreign cultural policy and cultural diplomacy could be said to be, such behavior is likely to be found. Punks are found also within the diplomacy.

It is a general conception that the term *entrepreneur* is derived from entrepreneurship, introduced as a central term to economic theory by Richard Cantillon (1680-1734) (Mangset and Røyseng 2009). Cantillon saw the entrepreneur as an important risk-taker and innovator of the economy (ibid.). More recently, the influential economist Joseph Schumpeter further emphasized the role of the entrepreneur within innovative organizations. In particular, Schumpeter asserts such an agent's capacity to combine existing resources in new and innovative ways, maximizing different forms of profit (Swedberg 2007). According to Martin and Osberg (2007: 31), "Schumpeter's analysis grounds entrepreneurship within a system, ascribing to the entrepreneur's role a paradoxical impact, both disruptive and generative. Schumpeter sees the entrepreneur as an agent of change within the larger economy." According to Martin and Osberg, others have not been as engaged as Schumpeter in seeing entrepreneurs as agents of change themselves, but rather as exploiters of such change. However, they continue:

Regardless of whether they cast the entrepreneur as a breakthrough innovator or an early exploiter, theorists universally associate entrepreneurship with opportunity. Entrepreneurs are believed to have an exceptional ability to see and seize upon new opportunities, the commitment and drive required to pursue them, and an unflinching willingness to bear the inherent risks. (ibid.)

Nevertheless, Schumpeter's focus is on the creative aspects of development, the entrepreneur's ability to see new solutions and new openings where everybody else stays on old paths, and his or her lack of fear for breaches with old and less efficient, however safe and comfortable, ways. In his work, Schumpeter himself, despite being primarily occupied with economics, drew parallels between entrepreneurs and artists, and pointed out the fact that entrepreneurs were also found within social fields other than economy (Mangset and Røyseng 2009).

The starting point for entrepreneurship is what Martin and Osberg (2007: 31) call an *entrepreneurial context*. This context is a state of “an equilibrium, albeit an unsatisfactory one,” in which things are not working particularly well, though no one seems to be able to break out. Martin and Osberg argue:

The entrepreneur is attracted to this suboptimal equilibrium, seeing embedded in it an opportunity to provide a new solution, product, service, or process. The reason that the entrepreneur sees this condition as an opportunity to create something new, while so many others see it as an inconvenience to be tolerated, stems from the unique set of personal characteristics he or she brings to the situation – inspiration, creativity, direct action, courage and fortitude. These characteristics are fundamental to the process of innovation. (ibid.: 31-32)

To Norwegian international cultural and arts relations, this has been just the case. For many years, Norway has been in an underdog position, always a step or two behind its Nordic neighbors Sweden (with its stunning music industry), Denmark (with its acclaimed film industry) or Finland (home of Nordic design). It was a situation in need of entrepreneurial action in the form of creative partnerships between diplomacy and cultural industry in joint cultural diplomacy:

Once inspired by the opportunity and in possession of a creative solution, the entrepreneur takes direct action. Rather than waiting for someone else to intervene or trying to convince somebody else to solve the problem, the entrepreneur takes direct action by creating a new product or service and the venture to advance it. (ibid.: 33)

The fact that entrepreneurial action relates closely to change includes that it may also be initiated by broader changes, renegotiating the general terms for the activity or practice of which it is part. In the case of Norwegian foreign cultural practice, such changes have come in abundance over the past few years. In the introduction, I pay attention to both the broad, crisis-like changes in foreign policy, with a trend towards a reduced formal and increased micro-oriented diplomacy (what Craig Hayden refers to as the social turn within diplomacy), and the massive changes within international culture life that have taken place in the wake of new technology and increased migration. On these grounds, it seems the entrepreneurial diplomat, with both formal and symbolic ties to the Foreign Service and national interests, has emerged.

The role of the entrepreneur as an agile, proactive agent who throws away existing dogmas and replaces them with new, surprising and game-changing thoughts, was also

shared by Max Weber (1968). In his work on charismatic leadership, the personal gift or charisma is closely linked to the capacity to spot possibilities that no one else sees. This entrepreneurial, charismatic gift is one shared between different social agents, with artists being one of the most commonly referred to. Moreover, the relationship and similarity between entrepreneurs of business and avant-garde artists is a point made by a number of scholars, i.a. Abbing (2002), Boltanski and Chiapello (1999), Florida (2002), Kris and Kurz (1979) and several others. In addition, within a neo-liberal creative industry discourse, the creative, self-employed, risk-willing agent has become almost an incarnation of the entrepreneurial mode (Mangset and Røyseng 2009). Both the fact that this position has deep roots in the arts, and that it thrives in international, highly competitive and high status environments, explain how it has emerged within foreign cultural affairs.

Within foreign cultural policy and international cultural relations, the entrepreneurial role opens up a range of legitimate and useful possibilities to diplomats, artists and cultural workers alike. Qualities such as being able to suggest new solutions in jammed negotiations (cf. Neumann 2011)<sup>76</sup> to mediate between, and sometimes supersede, assumedly opposing interests, general pragmatism (some would even say opportunism) and the ability to turn a blind eye to established dogmas, are highly valued in international cultural relations. Within the Foreign Service, away from the normative control of the departmental everyday discourse, a certain level of entrepreneurship is needed in order to take on and solve unexpected situations and events. A diplomat or local employee working with the arts is presumably greatly helped by entering or being ascribed the role of an entrepreneur, as it allows for “sleeping with the enemy” without being regarded as unofficial. That taken into consideration, the position as entrepreneur is one that suits employees of the foreign services well, and one you will probably find throughout the Service. The fact that both diplomats and artists (and cultural workers)

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<sup>76</sup> To diplomats, negotiation is an important part of the tricks of the trade.

move a lot– between countries, between fields of expertise, etc. – thus developing a highly interfacial character, just makes this assumption more likely; qualities offered by this subject position would greatly help in such transition scenarios.

An important point in a discursive approach to entrepreneurship within cultural diplomacy (which includes both formally trained diplomats and not) is that the (progressive) capacities portrayed as typical for the type of agent I refer to as a cultural diplomat entrepreneur are discursively produced. It should be stressed that this does not mean that such capacities do not exist outside of the discourse, they very may well, and the empirical material indicates that they do in many cases. Just as myths often resemble important fragments of deep knowledge (without for that reason resembling the full truth), discourse picks up on prominent features and reinforces their prominence. However, their appearances come into reality through discursive processes. The cultural diplomat position is further shaped and reinforced by the fact that it is directly related to equally discursively produced sites and places (in the way that New York is discursively produced as the world's art metropolis, or the Venice Biennale as the most important site for art and architecture in the world). The conclusion is thus that both the positions and the sites are made important and influential by the discourse (which does not exclude the possibility that both such positions and sites may have qualities that make them particularly enabled for this position). Furthermore, by researching and concluding on this field, I am aware that I am pertaining to the discourse, further shaping and maintaining ideas of people and places relation to- and effect on the empirical world.

According to Martin and Osberg (2007: 30), the term entrepreneurship “connotes a special, innate ability to sense and act on opportunity, combining out-of-the-box thinking with a unique brand of determination to create or bring about something new to the world.” Of course, such features fit poorly with Neumann's conclusion that the diplomacy, despite its heroic self-image to the contrary, is principally conservative and change-averse. Here, it is important to remember that an important aspect of a discursive approach to entrepreneurship within cultural diplomacy is that the

(progressive, dynamic, pragmatic, etc.) capacities portrayed as typical for the diplomatic socio-cultural entrepreneur are discursively produced. Here, two points should be stressed: first, this means that these “typical” features are not the vantage point of practice, but rather a framework that the agent works its way into. In other words, such features are not natural gifts characterizing all that enters a diplomatic loop. However, and this is the second point, the fact that such a position is discursively produced does not mean that it only exists as a rhetorical device. As people believe in such a position, and act it out, it *becomes* real. Moreover, just as myths often resemble important fragments of deep knowledge (without for that reason resembling the full truth), discourse picks up on prominent features and reinforces their prominence (cf. Bloor). Yet, their appearances come into reality through discursive processes.

Within diplomacy, the entrepreneur is a highly relevant position, because it combines the important quality of mediation (or being a mediator) with finding new, sometimes surprising out-of-the-box-solutions to locked situations (cf. Schumpeter, in Swedberg 2007). Abroad, apart from the normative control of the departmental everyday discourse, a certain level of entrepreneurship is needed in order to take on and solve unexpected situations and events. On a pragmatic level, such qualities are attractive in balancing instrumental aims with artist autonomy, creating and maintaining (often heterogeneous) influential networks, operating the balance between promotion and the facilitation of projects, art and artists, negotiating local and domestic expectations and needs, etc. Entrepreneurial activity of various sorts (diplomatic, cultural, social or even social-cultural) hence opens up a range of legitimate working modes as useful to the diplomat as to the artist or cultural worker. In fact, one of them is the ability to move and operate across a broad range of disciplines and discursive practices, something that explains why it is sometimes almost impossible to differentiate a cultural diplomat (within traditional diplomacy) from an artist or cultural worker (and vice versa).

The importance of this transformative capacity is illustrated by the role the locally employed expert has become at multiple Foreign Service missions. The trend over the past years is that traditional diplomats (mostly cultural attachés) are increasingly

replaced with art experts, operating in an interface between Foreign Affairs' staff and art field representatives, often with official MFA credentials, but with the cultural competence and capital of the arts. A diplomat or local employee working with the arts is assumedly greatly helped by entering or being ascribed the role of an entrepreneur, as it allows for "sleeping with the enemy," without being regarded as unofficial. The same scenario would assumedly be the case for diplomats working with environmental activists, high-ranking military or successful business persons. That being taken into consideration, the position of an entrepreneur is one that suits employees of the foreign services well, and one you will probably find throughout the services. The fact that diplomats move a lot – between countries, between fields of expertise, etc. – strengthens this assumption; qualities offered by this subject position would greatly help in such transition scenarios.

### 9.3.1 Site specificity

To understand the entrepreneurial mode of the modern cultural diplomacy, it is necessary to understand how the site within which the diplomacy operates is comprehended. As asserted in the methodology chapter, many of the most important markets for Norwegian art, and thus Norwegian art promotion, are situated in places that hold a – to a different degree, of course – a mythical position in the minds of artists, cultural workers and cultural diplomats (what I chose to call the broadened diplomacy). In the novel *NY BY*<sup>77</sup> from 2013, the Norwegian author Maria Børja, who herself served as a trainee at the Norwegian Consulate General in New York, describes the life of a young Norwegian serving as an information officer at the foreign mission. In one of the sections of the novel, we follow the main character on one specific day on the job, in which she reflects on its content in general, and Norway's official presence in the metropolis in particular:

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<sup>77</sup> The title translates to NY City.



... across the wide last crossing she had time to gather her thoughts before walking through the turning glass door underneath the enormous 825 stickers on 50th Street, smiling her “Hi, how are you this morning?” to the two–three receptionists standing there at all hours with their varying level of cordiality and attitude. She passed the elevators that only took you to 1–15 and 15–29 – she was going higher – and pushed the button on the last row: those going to the top. The elevator gave its loud ding when it arrived and took her all the way up to 38th floor in one breezy movement. Yet another morning she was at the right place at the right time, ready for a new day, still high on the fact that everything actually was this way: This was what she could call her every day life. Her job as a Communications Consultant at the Norwegian General Consulate, sharing entrance with the Norwegian UN delegation. She had her name on a door, in an office of importance, with the view of the best city on the planet.

Norway had been a blind spot in American mainstream media. It could only go one way, and that’s why she was here. They were supposed to make American journalists, culture columnists, art critics, book critics, gallery owners, curators, festival organizers, publishers, theaters, directors – in short the east coast’s cultural elite – “look to Norway”, and Lisa, Kristine, Ylva, in part Lindsay and Sivert, were the ones who would make it happen.

Besides the boss, the consul, who frequently opened up her residency for gatherings of up to 200 people. The first time Lisa attended one of them felt completely wild. It was formal, of course, but it was mostly the size of the apartment, and the apparatus working there, which astonished her. And yet it was only business as usual, something to get used to, like the high heels.

Lisa would pitch stories about Norwegian bands, writers, businesses and politicians to American journalists, bloggers and editors. She helped the Press Departments back in Norway reach through the media barrier during the CMJ music marathon, literature festivals and other major cultural events. Except for the really big names or issues – a writer like Per Petterson and the pianist Leif Ove Andsnes nearly sold themselves – every artist was a challenge. They would use “their Norwegianness” for all it was worth, but more than anything they were supposed to build the artist as central, leading, defining, unique – regardless of nationality. If something was “good for a Norwegian” it would never make it here, and too much Norwegianness could make the performer less important. “The Norwegian quality” could be a diversion. (Børja 2013)<sup>78</sup>

This rather lengthy excerpt brilliantly sets the focus on many of the most central and interesting aspects of the diplomacy’s foreign cultural operations in the metropolis. First, it highlights the excitement felt by the staff that has the opportunity to call work in “an important office” in New York City everyday life. After having conducted fieldwork at the same offices, I can subscribe to the sensation that this job depicts as being on top of the world, both literally and in definition by extension. It certainly relates to the mythological aspect of New York City, embodied by Frank Sinatra’s seminal postulate, “If I can make it there, I’ll make it anywhere,” as much as it does to all the pop cultural and historical references found here. The symbolic values of having a position in this climate, an oozing of up-tempo competitiveness, coolness and internationalism, are

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<sup>78</sup> The excerpt is translated to English from Norwegian by M. Børja.

therefore not to be underestimated. In terms of subject positions and diplomacy as a discursive practice, this symbolic value is highly productive. During the fieldwork at the Consulate General in New York, many of the Norwegians working there, both diplomats and locally employed staff, emphasized how they saw the city as the art capital of the world. When Børja's main character expresses joy over being in an important office, overlooking the world's greatest city, it hence resembles what is presumably the truth to most people working with Norwegian art and culture abroad. In this sense, the city is something of a focal point for status. To be there, working for Norwegian interests is consequently a defining thing.

Foreign cultural entrepreneurial practice closely relates to a specific type of site and arena, namely that of high status. As part of the professionalization of the practice, the focus increasingly is directed towards what a senior official of the MFA called "quality art in quality arenas." One interesting example illustrating this is the above-mentioned Norwegian-American Literature Festival. It was started by Frode Saugestad, himself an influential art entrepreneur, as an arena of literary exchange between American and Norwegian authors. It was soon picked up by the MFA as a valuable partner in the work to promote Norwegian literature in the US, in particular through the Consulate General in New York. In 2015, the festival made a guest entry in New York, and under the heading, *The Norwegian-American Literary Festival Comes to New York*, the influential literary magazine *The Paris Review*<sup>79</sup> wrote:

The festival begins on Wednesday, May 20, at the Westway in the Meatpacking District, where Karl Ove Knausgaard's reunited college band, Lemen, will take the stage. James Wood's band, the Fun Stuff, will perform, too, and Lydia Davis will begin the night in conversation with Dag Solstad about writing family history. Solstad is one of Norway's preeminent writers, the author of thirty-three books translated into thirty languages. Davis learned Norwegian by reading his latest novel, a four-hundred-page epic whose title translates, roughly, as *The Insoluble Epic Element in Telemark in the Period 1591–1896*.

Next, on Thursday, May 21, at Chelsea's 192 Books, James Wood will appear in discussion with four of Norway's most promising young writers: Kjersti Annesdatter Skomsvold, Carl Frode Tiller, Gunnhild Øyehaug, and Lars Petter Sveen. We'll introduce these writers in the weeks to come.

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<sup>79</sup> <http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2015/04/28/the-norwegian-american-literary-festival-comes-to-new-york-2/> Retrieved 22.05.2016

Finally, on Friday, May 22, at Sunny's, in Red Hook, we'll have a conversation with Knausgaard and Wood, followed by two additional performances from their respective bands, with a guest performance by The New Yorker's David Remnick.

The names stated in the article are all high profile within different spheres of the Norwegian literary scene and New York's art world. Especially intriguing is the cool mix of high-quality literature, art celeb's private (amateur) bands, trendy sites (like NYC's Meatpacking District), etc. On that note, this event is no different from other, similar events promoting Norwegian art and artists, both in the US and elsewhere, e.g. the Art Book Fair at MoMA, the Venice Biennale, the 100% Norway design festival at London Design Fair, etc., etc. In interviews with the Norwegian Consulate General in New York staff, it became clear that events like this had a special priority, specifically because of the high profile it had with renowned names from New York's art and media life. The principal objective with such events is to clearly achieve cultural policy aims like breaking Norwegian authors to a both commercially and symbolically important US market, connecting literary industry representatives of the two countries together and other related goals. As previous discussions demonstrate, another clear aim is to promote general Norwegian interests like neighboring cultural and cultural industry interests, or even general economic and political interests. One way of connecting the two areas of interest was, e.g. to make Prime Minister Solberg visit the New York Art Book Fair at its 2014 special Norway focus while she was in the city for the UN General Assembly. The visit was of course set up by the Consulate General, and the intended effect was to secure a surplus to all parts of the trilateral partnership, the MFA, the art organization and the local partner, the MoMA.

### 9.3.2 A broader diplomacy

An important component of the entrepreneurial subject position theory is that the diplomacy stays increasingly open to a broader range of agents than merely traditionally trained Foreign Service staff. The entrepreneurial position operating over traditional disciplinary boundaries may just as well stay open to the diplomat as to the festival director, the artist or the journalist. The factors that join them are the capacity to work and invest in dynamic networks, to emphasize results over ideology and a belief in the

economic potential from the arts, although often in terms of a broader profit perspective than traditional capitalist market thinking (more sustainable, ethical), etc. However, an important point is that they emanate from the Foreign Service, and hence find useful frameworks for operations there. Consequently, this new position adopts some of the micro-orientation of the new foreign policy realm (Hayden 2011), seeing, e.g. a writer like *Karl Ove Knausgård*<sup>80</sup> or an architect office like *Snøhetta*<sup>81</sup> as interesting ambassadors, not only for these actors personally or Norwegian literature or architecture's interests, but also for Norway's interests in general. This suggests a more expansive use of the terms *diplomacy* and *diplomat*. Of course, this does not mean that agents like Knausgård and Snøhetta are actual diplomats in an official (professional) sense. Instead, the point is that they, and others like them, have seemingly increasingly become integrated into the diplomatic loop, and that this has happened as the result of an intentional diplomatic work mode. Of special interest here is the role the locally employed (art expert) staff plays, often serving as both an extension of the traditional diplomacy into the civil world, and as a mediator of civil values into the idiosyncratic diplomatic discourse. Such local staff therefore seems to constitute a forerunner for a new sort of agent "floating" in-between different parts of an increasingly diverse diplomatic realm, adopting both the traditional ethos of the diplomacy and diplomatic work modes, while at the same time representing a breach with such ethos and modes.

One aspect of the diplomacy that is a recurring subject in these analyses is the position of the locally employed diplomatic staff. I have repeatedly underscored this group's ambiguous status, in-between the traditional diplomacy and the art field, taking on features from both discourses, mediating between them and acting across their borders. In this, an interesting question relates to loyalty, i.e. to what discourse they feel the most obligated in cases where their integrity is at play. This is interesting because it also sheds

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<sup>80</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl\\_Ove\\_Knausgård](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Ove_Knausgård)

<sup>81</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snøhetta\\_\(company\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snøhetta_(company))

light over to what extent the agents in the field are sensitive to the formal policymaking and implementation of the MFA; i.e. the relationship between foreign cultural policy discourse and practice. According to Neumann's theory, that diplomatic personnel are extremely loyal to a foreign policy discourse that again is conservative and inclined to keep existing practices, one would assume that formal policies would be implemented without further hesitation. The empirical material indicates that formally trained diplomats are indeed more inclined to be informed and to follow up the formal policies of the work field than locally employed staff. However, it seems as if when local projects are up and running, the relative autonomous position of the missions, and the ones working there, form a local context that calls for adaptations of central policy. Here, local staff members, closer to the art field actively negotiate the framework for operations in a way that implements the principal policy of the MFA in both dynamic and often quite pragmatic ways. When asked about how (cultural) diplomacy staff relates to the ministry policy within this sector, a locally employed staff member asserts:

They represent a set of rules in a way, and one that you have to act in accordance with, of course... However, this job is really very concrete... very much jumping into things. [...] And to be honest with you, I haven't really looked too meticulously into the overarching aims of the MFA, but... well, we are to promote Norwegian art and culture here in this country. And that is what we try to do, the best we can, absolutely all the time. I guess that is the principal mandate from the MFA. Then there are different ways to bring it into life.

According to the informant, rules are rules, but as you "jump into" real situations and local contexts, it is really up to the skills of the individual staff member to implement those rules in the best of ways. A well-known strategy of play of practice is, of course, to redefine or simplify what is thought to be the main or principal object of the activity, only to use this redefinition to legitimate their own practice. Stating the over-simplified aim of promoting Norwegian art (full stop) as the core of a practice, moreover in one specific context with specific features, really opens for just about any type of practice. Another informant (from another mission) also asserts the point about the local context being the important factor in how to implement central policies:

When it comes to that, I don't really think it has that much to say if we are locally employed or not, because... You know, we too are sent off to Oslo to attend meetings with the home office, and we go to the meetings for Foreign Service mission staff working with cultural affairs, so I would say that we are included in most of the things that are happening... Nonetheless, my general impression is that

the policy is to adapt to local context; that one realizes that working with cultural affairs is very different in the different countries and the different missions.

Downplaying an alleged difference between a traditional and a broadened diplomacy, in terms of appointed and locally employed diplomatic staff, this informant argues that local contexts are what really set the stage for foreign cultural practice. As argued above, this emphasis on local context opens for a negotiation of official policies. A third informant says:

We sometimes have disagreements, yes we do. Then it is... well, you have to be good at selling for your priorities, right ... "Why is this important?" and "What are the aims?" So, I feel a bit... after a few years in the bureaucracy, you learn... well, how things work, right. To have an aim, a plan, a strategy... Over time, these things are internalized, so you think of these things automatically.

Local employees are not diplomats per se, but since they represent the MFA, the cooperating partners in spite of this formality probably apprehend them as state officials. In any case, they operate as representatives of the art field, free of the bindings that come with being a MFA official. For example, when asked about what cultural policy aims the MFA holds, one of them answered in an almost coquettish way:

I want to stress that I am locally employed, so I wouldn't really know that much about what the MFA does or how they think about culture around the globe. I think they work differently with cultural affairs from place to place, at the different missions and at the home office.

They depart from- and respond clearly to an art discourse. The "real" diplomats operate in-between these different positions, with their actions informed by both an art and diplomatic (foreign ministry) discourse.

However, the diplomatic discourse also works on local employees, producing a consensus that everybody can live with. On informant tells about how the debate over local operational plans every year tend to be disciplined by discourse (in terms of habits and best practice):

There is always going to be some disagreement, but we always agree in the end. We do. However, I guess that over time you become a bit internalized, because it's something about... I remember when I got here, I used to ponder the more overarching political sides to this, and to question it... However, and I think that happens regardless of what job you take, I think it's hard to keep that fresh. Because you'll get very... really fast you get a feel of what works and what doesn't, and soon you are the one that gets intimidated by someone new coming in questioning things, saying, OK, now we are going to rethink this and that. And, I think that is very useful, but it's also a bit... because you try and fail and make experiences that are presumably worth something.

This quote shows of course how discursive production takes place, in terms of both setting the frame for how to think and act within a specific context, and offering a perfectly rational reason for getting in line with the discursive practice. As the informant later suggests in the interview, because diplomats have appointed positions and thus alternate regularly, one would presume that the MFA would be a less favorable place for a specialized discourse to emerge. However, as Neumann asserts, thorough training and periods at home where diplomatic discourse is taught and refreshed has a compensative effect (2011).

### 9.3.3 Personal relations as an asset

In many ways, the cultural entrepreneur of the diplomacy thus at the same time resembles or reflects a new type of art world leader. A young generation of people, less engaged in ideological positions, typically asserted and described by scholars like Bourdieu, Abbing or Becker, and more in seeing pragmatic selections of art reaching an international audience. Several of the informants central in making those selections, e.g. in the expert committees allocating travel funds, emphasized the point that they often allocated money to projects that they themselves did not like, or thought of as bad art, but that still were wanted by quality institutions abroad.

An informant working in the GC in New York says:

We try to ask our partners here what they think is happening, what they think could explain this success [the emerging Norwegian art scene]. It's hard to tell of course, but some point out that what we see now is the result of the close contact between a specific group of people back home. Many of them the same age, they perhaps attended the same schools, they know each other, and things develop a bit... well, inter-sectorially, right, which makes things more exciting, and fills things with a certain type of energy, quite simply. Some compare it to Stockholm, which apparently is much more sedate, and, well quite frankly there is much more energy in the Norwegian art scene. And, that is felt here, which is extraordinary.

This informant's analysis is a precise description of the entrepreneurial network that has evolved in foreign cultural diplomacy over the past few years. The informant perhaps confuses the diplomacy's own role with the principal position that it should merely serve as a facilitator. Apart from being the invisible hand facilitating for the various agents to enter into cooperations and co-productions, mediating material and symbolic resources,

the diplomacy also enters the network directly. Particularly after the start of the practice of employing local staff to work as cultural advisors, often with close ties to the art world, the boundaries between different occupations and levels – artist, art worker, bureaucrat, diplomat, art dealer, etc. – have been reduced or are gone.

An important feature of the cultural entrepreneur within the diplomacy is that he or she is heavily dependent on, and generative of personal networks, as well as professional relationships. As described above, the networks within the Norwegian foreign cultural practice are relatively small and transparent. In return, its members have a deep knowledge about each other, something they take advantage of regularly. During the fieldwork, I was struck many times by the relative intimacy and proximity between diplomats (in a traditional sense), locally employed staff working at the Foreign Service missions, artists, journalists and art world representatives and cultural workers of various kinds (often in leading positions). Perhaps it would be wrong to use the family metaphor, but it would certainly not be wrong to claim that it was rare that I came across a person not knowing, or at least knowing about another actor within the foreign cultural field.

## **9.4 Chapter conclusions**

In the final analysis chapter, practice is in question, more specifically foreign cultural policy practice, i.e. the task of under different circumstances and according to different interests acting out and implementing the very policies that were discussed and analyzed in Chapters 5 through 8. Despite the fact that foreign cultural policy today is played out at an arm's length distance from the MFA's corridors of power, a peculiar feature of placing cultural policy responsibility within the diplomacy is the operational character this activity takes on. It is indeed independent expert committees that decide which art and artists are to receive travel grants from the MFA, and undoubtedly, the advisor organizations have a large say in the design and organizing of expert visits to Norwegian cultural events both home and abroad. Still, often, and particularly in everyday work life, diplomats or other staff and one of Norway's many Foreign Service



missions are the ones who implement these policies in practice. They are the ones carrying out the work of keeping multiple networks running, bringing new and old contacts together, and introducing new art professionals in New York, London, Tallinn or New Delhi to the world of Norwegian art and culture.

The backdrop to the present Norwegian cultural diplomacy/foreign cultural policy is a Foreign Service in an alleged state of radical change. New technology and the emergence of micro-diplomacy, a changed geopolitical situation, the dissolution of the concept of nation-states (at least in its non-territorial meaning), and an international art world in comprehensive (predominately digital) transformation, has left traditional state diplomacy in a trench of irresolution and incapacitation. One would assume, perhaps, that within this climate the Foreign Service's cultural policy would be negatively affected. The empirical data indicates that for Norwegian cultural diplomacy that is not necessarily the case. On the contrary, diplomacy operates with cultural policy extensively, albeit in "new" ways. In particular, the diplomacy seems to thrive off its pragmatic and dynamic nature, using its networking skills to access important institutions and agents in local contexts, about whom they have worked up sole first-hand information. As such, they become an indispensable asset to its art world partners. It could therefore be claimed that within the current diplomacy, the branch securing cultural policy objectives is one of the branches that actually still works well (and even better than before).

Since the decentralization of power from the MFA to the art field in 2003, professional and pragmatic cooperation has replaced much of the tension that reigned in the field, due to allegations about a lack of administrative professionalism (arm's length) and unfortunate instrumentalism (Mangset 1997). As art professionals administer the foreign cultural affairs, the fear of a direct instrumental use of the arts is reduced, and with good reason. In this new environment, the diplomacy and art field have gone from conflict and mistrust to a fruitful, symbiotic partnership. One of the most immediately observable results from this development is that foreign and cultural policy interests and aims have merged. Hence, it is not always easy to tell whether the Foreign Service

efforts are mainly in favor of the arts or general Norwegian interests. Neither of these partners seems eager to set that priority straight, another indication of the pragmatism characterizing this discourse. Entrepreneurs within the diplomacy hold increasingly hybrid roles, mediating between artists, art organizers, politicians, etc., so it therefore makes sense to talk about an extended diplomacy consisting of agents both within and outside of the traditional, formal Foreign Service. What is driving these entrepreneurs is primarily cultural policy aims that secure artists' international careers, establishing and maintaining important international networks for Norwegian art institutions. Concurrently, a shift of focus has been observable. Standards set by an international more than a domestic discourse define quality in art, artists and arenas, thereby increasing the number of artists who enter international elite networks. At the same time, this reduces the focus on broad international art exchange, an activity that from the start was regarded an important part of foreign cultural policy. There has been a professionalization of the work with culture; both in terms of professionals working with strategies and artistic content of the effort, and in terms of ensuring the interests of professional artists and cultural workers. At the same time, the focus on foreign policy effects from the arts has changed its character.

Principally, this development raises some important critical questions, one being whether Norwegian (cultural) diplomacy should function more or less as an export office for the arts business. Moreover, as the diplomacy, in the broadest of senses, approaches elite sites and arenas, another dilemma occurs. Does this elite culture represent Norwegian general values, or, is it in fact so that the effort aimed to secure cultural policy aim does not produce, but instead reduces general foreign policy effects from the arts? These are all questions that in my opinion have to be responded to, as a modern diplomacy is emerging within the framework of a changed world order.

## 10. Final conclusions

The main aim of this thesis has been to examine culture and cultural policy's position within foreign policy discourse, primarily within a Norwegian discourse, and particularly within the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), but also on more general grounds. The purpose of the work has thus been to contribute to close a remarkably wide research gap within the field of cultural policy (and to some degree, I believe, foreign policy as well) research. This is *remarkable*, given the status anything even slightly international has gained over the past decades, within arts, politics, academia and a number of other areas of society. This is *remarkable*, given the many fundamental changes due to geopolitical conditions and developments like globalization effects and technological development, which have affected this field over the past two or three decades, surely making it an interesting subject of research. This is *remarkable*, given the increasingly international character the arts have also gained over the same time-span, especially with the development of a seemingly global, profitable and restlessly fast-moving creative industry. This is *remarkable*, given the intriguing character of a field that strikes the interested as a melting pot of two so different worlds, such as that of cultural and foreign policy, with all its innate tensions, conflicts, paradoxes and dilemmas. Based on this, the thesis' response to its overarching research problem has followed three main paths of inquiry. How culture and cultural policy are *conceived*, *legitimated* and *operationalized* within the foreign policy discourse has all been the subject of the subordinate analyses presented throughout the five previous chapters.

Now it is time to sum up and conclude this work. Since the five analyses chapters all have their own separate conclusion sections, at this point I will attempt to conclude on a more overarching level, including a discussion of the most important implications of these findings. The aim here is to take on a slightly broader perspective to the knowledge produced in the analyses. What is really at stake when culture and art enter foreign policy – what are the implications of the findings? This also includes a subsequent, self-reflexive look at the overall academic value and relevance of the thesis' conclusions. How do they answer to the needs of the research field, and to what degree do they

establish a viable line from the specific (Norwegian foreign cultural policy) to the general (any foreign cultural policy)? Finally, some thoughts on where to go further follows: What gaps remain to be filled, and which of these are, in my opinion, most important to attend to? These questions consequently round out not only this conclusive chapter, but also the thesis as a whole.

## **10.1 Dominant knowledge/power regimes**

Following from the choice of a discursive approach to this study, throughout the work I have been engaged in seeking dominant, and thus determining knowledge/power regimes within the discourse that belong to the field of foreign cultural policy. In his work with discursive power, one of the central characters of this analytical direction, Michel Foucault, engaged in identifying and analyzing such regimes that he believed to be universally (and historically) determining, such as morals and a sense of justice. On the other hand, in my work, and contrary to Foucault, I have been more engaged in knowledge/power regimes on a micro level. Also contrary to Foucault, I see these regimes as more open to change, since the ones who enter them are granted agency to negotiate the terms on which they are determined.

One dominant knowledge/power regime that does keep a dominant character that appears seemingly fixed is internationalization in itself, i.e. as an all-embracing concept or framework of rational behavior. In an increasingly globalized environment, for an artist as well as for a politician or a bureaucrat, not to operate with or take into account international ambitions have become unthinkable over time. The internationalization of Norwegian cultural life (and the Norwegian cultural sector) is consequently also one of the most vigorous arguments in the MFA's work with foreign cultural policy.

To exclusively operate within local, regional or national borders, both symbolically and literally, has not alone become almost impossible due to its low status, but also due to the close link that has been established between local and global spheres. Local actions may hence have global consequences and vice versa, a fact that has become sadly

evident in cases like, e.g. the posting of Mohamed cartoons in a small Danish newspaper (Jyllandsposten). For the sake of balance, such an interrelationship of course also has numerous positive consequences. Even funny consequences, such as the case where the emergence of a specifically Norwegian version of black metal<sup>82</sup> peculiarly led the way for an Italian university to start Norwegian classes, teaching the students old (and in Norway actually quite obscure) Norwegian folk songs in Norwegian.<sup>83</sup>

The impulse to internationalism also holds another and closely related rationale, namely the one related to the concept of quality. To maintain professionalism and quality of a high international standard is seen a central prerequisite of Norwegian foreign cultural thinking. Despite the fact that quality is the object of an ongoing art world conflict on its specific content, the idea that international work requires a specifically high quality and professionalism seems to bind the agents of the discourse together. To the arts, this is of course related to a desire to be internationally relevant. To the MFA, the logic seems to be that art of a high quality best secures a high impact in terms of the multiple goals the ministry holds.

The incitation, both to internationalism and quality, moreover relate to a third important knowledge/power regime, namely to think of (and hence to promote) Norway as a cultural nation. This notion is interesting because it challenges existing notions about Norway primarily being a nation defined by nature, i.e. a nation that finds much of its resources and its identity from its nature and nature-given dispositions (cf. Neumann 2002). A strong premise for the culture nation notion is the idea that a global cultural conversation exists, a conversation in which it is crucially important for any nation with the ambition to be seen as developed to take part. Within this conversation, which includes discussions over limits to- and possibilities within the free and liberal

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<sup>82</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_metal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_metal)

<sup>83</sup> <http://www.dagbladet.no/kultur/2007/05/24/501575.html> Retrieved 23.02.2017.

democracy, culture and art play an important role as a superstructure with a civilizing effect.

## 10.2 Five defining paradoxes

In the following, I would like to draw attention to the five distinct paradoxes that I believe have profoundly defined and determined the foreign cultural policy field, as they run like a theme throughout all Norwegian foreign cultural policy, principally affecting all aspects of its policies and modes of operations. The number neatly reflects the number of analysis chapters in the thesis, but does not necessarily in a strict sense represent a number relating to certain given chapter themes, problems, analyses or chapter conclusions. Instead, it reflects a number of findings that adhere, running across several or all chapters and analyses, and thus representing what I claim to be indisputable components of importance in foreign cultural policy. The five are:

1. ***Instrumental foreign policy vs. non-instrumental art fields.*** The paradoxical situation where the responsibility for foreign cultural policy and an art field allergic to instrumentalism is placed within the (inevitably instrumental) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. ***Art being Norwegian vs. art being art.*** The paradoxical situation where the government wants to promote art as 100% Norwegian, whereas the art world is only interested in 100% art.
3. ***Art for the few vs. international communication with the many.*** The paradoxical situation where a micro-oriented Open diplomacy strategy increasingly dominated by a professional, elite art risks losing touch with the broad social foundation with which it intends to communicate.
4. ***The decreasing status vs. the increased need for cultural competence.*** The paradoxical situation where foreign cultural competence is radically losing status within international foreign policy, while cultural awareness, transparency and competence, is more needed than ever before.

5. ***Traditional diplomacy vs. cultural diplomacy.*** The paradoxical situation where traditional diplomacy despite being in institutional crisis, has given rise to a new, broadened cultural diplomacy, more powerful than ever before.

#### 10.2.1 No escape from a multifocal policy

***The first of the five paradoxes relates to the situation where the responsibility for foreign cultural policy and an art field allergic to instrumentalism is placed within the (inevitably instrumental) Ministry of Foreign Affairs.***

More than anything, both Norwegian and other nations' foreign cultural policy is characterized by its multiple and interrelated purposes of both direct and indirect character, aimed at both external and internal markets and audiences. Thus, a situation occurs where a primary, direct goal such as like promoting an artist, an art institution or even an art sector on a generic level (like Norwegian visual arts) in a certain territory, a goal that finds its explanation primarily in a cultural or art policy rationale, also holds one or more subordinate, indirect goals. This could be to uphold cultural relations with certain nations (the way culture is now one of the few remaining channels in the Norwegian-Russian relationship, amidst the recent reoccurring East-West crisis of confidence) or to promote Norway as a trustable, innovative and egalitarian nation, i.e. based on its cultural standard. The latter of course is something that is anticipated to increase export of a more general character. Or, to equip Norwegian art institutions aiming for international, external markets and audiences with a governmentally supported artistic profile (e.g. focusing on high quality or some feature commonly seen as typically Norwegian in a positive sense), which could also include a goal that secures the production and maintenance of a sound, internal Norwegian self-image.

A reoccurring object of discussion throughout the thesis is how and on what grounds this multifocal profile is principally shaped by the logics of a continuous debate over instrumentalism. Particularly important here is how instrumentalism within this context is predominantly taken into use on terms stated by the arts and the art field. This means that the main conception of instrumentalism and the problems it potentially represents,

also within the MFA and diplomacy, is given within a framework that is arts-driven. This does not mean, however, that instrumental aims are conceived of as exclusively problematic. For one, instrumental and non-instrumental aims and strategies constitute each other, thereby making it difficult to engage in one without at the same time on some level acknowledging the other. Moreover, instrumental aims are used strategically by the different agents who inhabit the field, as almost all international cultural relations have interrelated, multifocal agendas consisting of both instrumental and non-instrumental aims. Consequently, to isolate instrumental objectives to foreign policy and non-instrumental to the arts and cultural policy only, fails to report the full picture of how culture and art are legitimated within a foreign cultural policy discourse.

This brings us to the first of the five paradoxes that characterizes foreign cultural policy: how an explicit ambition to perform a cultural policy responsibility in the case of foreign cultural policy implies an (instrumental) foreign policy so tightly interwoven in the totality of the policy work that it makes no sense to try to brush it off as insignificant. Still, this is what is often done as the different agents of this field, with different agendas and means, pragmatically negotiate over conditions that would leave the field open to just their interests. In its recent current operations, and especially since the reorganizing in 2003, the MFA is very careful to emphasize culture as a policy field of its own, within an otherwise foreign policy-oriented context. As noted above, much effort is done to secure seeing art as an aim instead of a means. Thus, one could think that the ministry really is living up to its cultural policy mandate, conducting a coherent and targeted policy for- and by the arts. However, taking Mangset's conclusions from his 1997 study as a point of departure, this ambition should perhaps be judged as somewhat naïve (from a more critical perspective, even speculative). The MFA's cultural policy work, as well as their operationalization and implementation of the mandate given by the Parliament, is so tightly integrated with their other policy tasks that it is fair to ask whether such a differentiation of one specific policy area is either possible or useful. Most prominently, this dilemma is seen in questions about commercial and trade policy effects from the arts, where it is possible to observe that such commercial aims and



effects take over an increasingly large portion of attention and funding resources. This, at the cost of a cultural exchange that holds less commercial potential, or that presupposes long-term thinking for such a potential to fully unfold. The same is observable in the use of culture for different branding purposes, in which it is quite difficult to differentiate between the work for the brand of Norwegian culture, art and artists, and nation branding (of politics, business and social conditions) in general. The apparent reduced degree of instrumentality that followed from the MFA strengthening their cultural policy profile (particularly through implementing the policies described in White paper report no. 19 from 2013), and that efficiently calmed the previous art field protests, could hence prove to be more of a rhetorical than a real device.

An overall question that therefore relates to all of the above-mentioned areas dealing with legitimation is whether it is at all possible to speak of an instrumental or a non-instrumental foreign cultural policy. To this, the concluding answer has to be *no*. Even though instrumental and non-instrumental aims and strategies are seen, at least rhetorically, as distinctly different and mutually exclusive, the multi-aim character of this policy field, including instrumental and non-instrumental aims and objectives in indissoluble combinations, is a destiny from which neither politicians nor bureaucrats or cultural workers can escape.

#### 10.2.2 100% Norwegian art or simply 100% art?

***The second of the five paradoxes relates to the situation where the government wants to promote art as 100% Norwegian, whereas the art world is only interested in 100% art.***

This paradox, that describes and defines foreign cultural policy, relates to the relationship between national distinctiveness and an ambition at the same time to stay internationally relevant. The paradoxical connects to the fact that if the MFA promotes Norwegian art too explicitly as Norwegian, it could fall victim to becoming regarded as provincial and irrelevant in the exact places where the MFA would want it to succeed. It is just that to promote something as explicitly national is in many ways what a Ministry

of Foreign Affairs is supposed to do, and is what legitimizes their operations as an official state agent. For art to be truly interesting within an international discourse, it has to be good enough, not for Norway and Norwegian conditions, but for the world.

A related aspect of this paradox is how artists and the arts, while on a rhetorical level that downplays national origin and belonging, act out such a belonging in practice. International work includes several representational roles and aspects, e.g. artists representing their profession and art genre (Norwegian arts and crafts or Norwegian black metal), a national art discourse, and finally a national general discourse. Going abroad with governmental support could therefore mean taking on a greater representational role than one would expect. To succeed becomes a question of a national matter, and it is indeed captivating to observe *the great seriousness* with which many art world agents go to international work. It is this seriousness that at some level implies also being an ambassador for more general Norwegian interests. Many artists are proud of representing their nation and national values that they find legitimate (like the social democratic design of the opera building or the view on gender equality or children's rights in the literature).

This calls attention to a sense of national pride of some sort working as a powerful knowledge/power regime within the discourse, enabling for both consciously and unconsciously mediating national interests, even though this at some point should interfere with or even oppose generic attitudes toward (e.g. national) labeling. One interpretation of this finding is that in its unconscious form resonates with a theory of structural power, in the form of what Lukes denotes as a third dimension of power or what Foucault terms *governmentality*. The distinction between the two goes through whether or not the governor, here the government and its ministry, intends the power to work. If I have to conclude on this, I would suggest that the power here works both discursively and as part of a hegemony in which the government sees it in their interest that citizens hold sympathies to their home country, which is founded in little other than it happened to be the place where they were born.

### 10.2.3 The elitist turn and the changed diversity concept

***The third of the five paradoxes relates to the situation where a micro-oriented Open diplomacy strategy increasingly dominated by a professional, elite art risks losing touch with the broad social foundation with which it intends to communicate.***

This paradox connects to the fact that while culture and art are viewed as important means of communication with the outside world on individual, generic and general levels, the choice to pursue a series of more or less elitist niche arenas and audiences could mean missing large groups and strata of outside world populations. To the extent that art and culture are suited to promote general Norwegian interests abroad, it is seen as an efficient component of a new, micro-oriented diplomacy,<sup>84</sup> the art quality view presently efficacious, aimed at arenas and audiences of a high quality and status, and within a frame of broad popular international cooperation, could prove disproportionately elitist. This paradox hence interrelates with the former, in the way that it relates to a balance-art between singular and general interests.

In reality, the advisor organizations, their underlying expert committees and the MFAs mutual interest in quality and access to high status arenas abroad, together with the local demand principle, has moved Norwegian foreign cultural policy in a direction where the focus is increasingly tuned in on quality forms as defined by an international art discourse, rather than a domestically based need. This turn includes an increased focus on commercial quality and value, from the government obviously, but also one can assume from the art field itself. Even though the focus on commercial value seems to have come with the new conservative government, explicated in the new budget propositions highlighting a foreign cultural policy emphasis on creative economy and industries, this turn has been going on much longer, at least since the reorganization of the field in 2003. Moreover, I think that it is plausible to claim that it connects to the art

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<sup>84</sup> People to people diplomacy / Open diplomacy / cultural diplomacy)

field's increasingly commercial orientation in what it sees as high quality and value, particularly within an international art discourse (Velthuis 2013). The development is perhaps also propelled by the emergence of popular culture that is highly (some would claim aggressively) determining within modern arts, also in the sense of taking on a pragmatic view on instrumentalism in terms of adhering to a commercial rationale.

At the same time, many art sub-sectors and -genres considered to be of high quality are not particularly commercially lucrative. These, as well as many commercial art and cultural workers, are not entering the international cultural exchange from a commercial rationale alone. However, it seems as if these sub-genres also increasingly integrate a commercial logic as part of their quality concepts, not in a way that is seen to threaten artistic autonomy, but instead negotiated as a way of securing the artist so that he or she can continue to produce art. This motion can therefore be seen as part of a broader trend of an increasingly pragmatic art world.

As indicated above, the changed quality focus within foreign cultural policy is closely related to a changed diversity concept. The change denotes a transition from diversity in a *vertical* sense, including a spectrum of agents and expressions, from top professionals to amateurs, but within a few selected sub-genres, to diversity in a *horizontal* sense, including a specter of sub-genres, but by professional artists and of professional quality only. Whereas the few selected sub-genres in question were mostly classical genres, what has become known as "high" art forms, like classical music, ballet dance, classical literature, figurative visual art, etc., new genres included in a diversity extended horizontally, including popular art, street art, performance art, modern dance and so forth.

Despite the inclusion of sub-genres other than high arts, a development that also reflects a broader trend in society (Peterson and Kern 1996, Crane 2009, Storey 2009), this change indicates a turn towards a more elitist Norwegian art profile. In terms of Mangset's network model from 1997, it could hence be claimed that an *elitist* ideology has gained a foothold at the sacrifice of the *egalitarian-corporative*. This is strengthened

by the trend that the elitist ideology's appurtenant *impresario-curator* network, focusing on the high end of an international hierarchy of arenas (as defined by a small number of gatekeeping experts) has improved their position at the sacrifice of the corporative-egalitarian ideology's *extended-enthusiast network*, with its focus on arenas "outside the institutionalised channels of promotion of culture abroad" (Mangset 1997: 99).

Within the current thinking, success at important venues and exhibitions in the leading world metropolises is much welcomed, particularly in a small country like Norway. Nonetheless, it is important to conclude this section with a slight warning against an overly aggressive and one-dimensional effort based on an elitist quality work mode. In turn, what is produced as high quality within the discourse constitutes the framework within which quality is assessed, setting the discourse in danger of becoming tautological or self-referential. In the long term, this can inhibit the type of innovation that the art world itself sees as the very essence of the arts, namely to develop beyond the scope that defines its operations. For the government and the MFA, the turn towards a commercial, trade policy-oriented rationale should cause some special reflection. This is most prominently because an increased (and otherwise positive) professionalization of the field could also limit the content of the Norwegian cultural brand, thus making it vulnerable for changes in international trends and moods.

#### 10.2.4 Increasingly important, increasingly low status

***The fourth of the five paradoxes relates to the situation where foreign cultural competence is radically losing status within international foreign policy, while cultural awareness, transparency and competence is more needed than ever before.***

As noted above, a prominent rationale within the foreign cultural policy discourse is that culture nation status is a crucial component of any developed country. Such a status, in which a cultural self-awareness is seen as a barometer of the degree of civilization, is also i.a. seen as an important means to promote international peace and communication. Since intercultural communication in today's world seems to be in an ongoing state of deficit, one would think that foreign cultural policy would thrive within

a wider foreign policy context. To see that the exact opposite is the case, that within foreign policy, culture and art's status holds an all-time low, is therefore another one of the interesting paradoxes of foreign cultural policy.

Within cultural diplomacy literature, while some advocate for neglecting culture as a relevant instrument of improved communication, others cannot seem to get enough of it. Others again warn against cultural diplomacy becoming a vehicle of a one-dimensional cultural export, in which a plurality is traded off for commercial profits. It is not difficult to see that by many standards, culture has failed as an effective, direct means of foreign policy and international relations. However, it does evoke pessimism to see that the response to an increased world tension is a hard rather than soft policy means. In this situation, it does seem appropriate to conclude with an appeal whilst holding a realistic ambition in terms of what effects art and culture can and cannot produce, and to not entirely lose sight of the civilizing powers of art and culture.

#### 10.2.5 A new cultural diplomacy emerging

***The last of the five paradoxes relates to the situation where traditional diplomacy despite being in institutional crisis has given rise to a new, broadened cultural diplomacy, more powerful than ever before.***

The fifth and final paradoxical situation within the foreign cultural policy field that I believe is of a decisive character relates to diplomacy itself. This reflects that while the diplomacy as an organization is in an alleged state of crisis, and culture's recent status within diplomacy seems to be in sharp decline, a new broadened cultural diplomacy has successfully emerged, thereby rearticulating the Foreign Service mandate in an extraordinarily powerful way.

However, this development, which represents a very interesting and potentially fruitful practice, could contain a problematic implication. First, because the diplomacy in this new and broadened version becomes increasingly operational, this could challenge the arm's length principle, and its idea of a dispersion of power. Within this model,

pragmatic agents from the arts, media, business and traditional diplomacy could be seen to operate in a corporative system where both divergent and mutual interests are handled in relation to site specificity, rather than an overarching and coherent policy. Here, the Foreign Service would potentially sit on an increased power over the foreign cultural policy, rather than a decrease, as was the idea from 2003, in the sense that this power would be more concealed and consequently more entitled to work outside of official control. Second, and related to the first, because such a broadened diplomacy could potentially turn highly specialized, it is in danger of producing networks that are closed and implicit, instead of being democratically open. Even though international networks of young, energetic and charismatic art world leaders, ditto for artists and cultural workers, influential journalists and diplomats can get a lot done, they could simultaneously become self-willed and elitist. This new broadened diplomacy could therefore be seen as a step away from the democratic people-to-people micro diplomacy popularized in the post-cold war decades, and a step towards a specialized, elitist and actually more instrumental diplomacy. Hence, the same petit warning that was offered in the previous sections is in place here. To implement this strategy as a general work mode, rather than a way of operating and communicating with certain, selected communities of experts and high-status cultural workers, could hence be seen as the best fruitful extension of the current success.

### **10.3 Findings relevance**

A recurring problem for researchers is to what degree results from a specific survey or study possesses information and findings that could have value on a general basis. In this case, this problem has both an internal and external aspect. From an internal point of view, relevance is determined in terms of the degree to which the empirical dataset is seen as suited for making general assumptions, i.e. other than the specific objects that were observed in the study. As far as I can see, the salient point here is to what extent the three Foreign Service missions visited arenas specific to a degree where they bear little resemblance with the other missions in the Foreign Service network. I deal with this in the methodology chapter as well, as they are special. They contain greater

resources than other missions, they are placed in what is generally agreed as more important art markets and territories than other missions, and they (consequently) maintain a closer contact with both the local and Norwegian art world than other missions. This indicates that the analyses have to be approached with caution. They may not fully shed light over what takes place in a small embassy in Lithuania or a remote embassy in Buenos Aires. Another important factor is the fact that within this study, the focus has been centered on the MFA and its cluster of foreign cultural policy partners. That means that the art field is represented with only a (strategically selected) sample of its institutions and organizations (most prominently the seven advisory organizations). This sample does not represent the entire art field. Most prominently, the most important part underrepresented is the individual artist perspective.

Also, from an external point of view, the relevance question is elevated to a higher level. In this study, several conditions indicate that the findings, despite primarily relating to one specific context, the Norwegian case, may still hold interest for- and illuminate problems of a more general character. For example, the fact that in terms of both cultural policy and foreign cultural policy models and traditions, Norway holds features similar to many other nations, is a point well-illustrated by a number of comparative studies (DiMaggio 1986, Montias 1986, Kawashima 1995, Wyszomirski, Burgess et al. 2003, Pamment 2012, Mangset 2013). Furthermore, and thus indicating relevance, is the fact that the findings of this study relate to (to some degree support, to some challenge) the framework of existing international research (e.g. Paschalidis 2009, Nisbett 2016). Within this scope, my results should have relevance for a larger cultural, and perhaps even a foreign policy research discourse, than the Norwegian only.

Some factors, however, could also indicate the opposite. In particular, this relates to the fact that the Norwegian MFA has an explicit and specific cultural policy responsibility rarely found anywhere else. This fact would influence on how, and by what strategies and political signals, other nations' foreign ministries operate. Another factor is the fact that diplomacy is determined to a large degree by the status of the nations of which it belongs. Hence, and as already indicated above, this study would possess a greater



relevance to countries of a similar size and geopolitical and/or cultural importance as Norway, and to a less degree countries that are in one of several ways different from Norway. Such a difference could relate to being much bigger or more influential (like e.g. France, the U.K. or the U.S.), or smaller (if possible), with a significantly different political system or less resources (to implement foreign cultural policies and nation branding). Nevertheless, even in these cases, and under these different circumstances, I believe that this study could hold some relevance, as long as these previously mentioned factors are borne in mind and adjusted for.

These listed factors that could potentially contribute to a crude or, worse, a biased study, at the same time represent productive thresholds for research that would further elaborate, supplement and improve our knowledge about this research field and object. Three such supplementary research themes, or areas, are pointed out as being especially relevant and necessary. They relate, respectively, to both the internal and the external research level noted above, one being relevant for both an internal *and* external research scope.

First, to help fill out the picture started in this study, more research should be done on how foreign cultural policy is thought and practiced in small Foreign Service missions. Second, attending to both the asserted existing research gap, which is hardly eliminated by the means of one (this) research effort, and the need to see national practices in an international field in relation to this, new and updated comparative studies on different national foreign cultural policies should be initiated. Third, in order to obtain knowledge about the approaches and experiences of the individual art practitioners of this field, research focusing on artists and cultural workers' international agencies should be initiated as soon as possible. To actually follow artists, art and projects, not only the level that organizes and facilitates for such artistic activity, to see how they relate to and negotiate the problems and dilemmas described throughout this thesis – representation, tensions of instrumentalism, a turn towards a commercial rationale, etc. – would be highly interesting and highly needed. Individually and together, this research would contribute strongly to improving not only the knowledge about nations,

institutions or individuals' need for- or interest in international operations and relations, but prove important in a greater game of understanding how we act, both because of- and in spite of national confinements and possibilities.

## 10.4 Post scriptum

In 1942, at a speech given at the handover ceremony of a naval ship in Washington D.C., President Franklin D. Roosevelt uttered the words “look to Norway” in an attempt to raise courage in both Norwegian and European resistance against German Nazi occupants. The President said:

If there is anyone who still wonders why this war is being fought, let him look to Norway. If there is anyone who has any delusions that this war could have been averted, let him look to Norway; and if there is anyone who doubts the democratic will to win, again I say, let him look to Norway.

The speech was particularly important, as it served to modify the official picture of Norway in the U.S. that had been seriously damaged by a U.S. journalist witnessing the German takeover of Oslo in 1940, a takeover that took place almost totally without resistance from a blitz-shocked Norwegian population, misinterpreting the shock as indifference and acceptance. It was, hence, an instructive example of the fight over the truth concerning how a nation and national character is conceived, and the strategies available in order to correct or adjust a “misguided” truth, i.e. an instructive example of nation branding.

The look to Norway slogan was paraphrased by President Bill Clinton in 1999, in a speech at a royal dinner during an official visit to Norway, and later by the U.S. senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders, strengthening Norwegian's self-esteem by giving the impression that even the U.S. tends to look to Norway for a tutorial as things get tough. Look to Norway has therefore come to epitomize everything that is seen to be good about Norway and Norwegians, particularly as Norwegians themselves see it, and thus serves as a micro-level impetus to a serious (but somewhat out of proportion) universalist ambition of a country of five million people in the far northern outskirts of Europe.

According to a recent survey carried out by Leira and Sverdrup (2015: 13) among Norwegian diplomats, “Norway’s international reputation” and the work to improve this reputation was seen *the* most important principal interest of all. Over 75% of the Foreign Service missions assessed such work as very or quite important, whereas none assessed it as irrelevant. This stand presumably reflects a general Norwegian interest. As this study has shown, on all levels – from a generis art field level, via the bureaucratic and political level to the society as a whole – to be seen and counted as a relevant international culture nation is important. Perhaps even more, as part of a collective agency, it is vital. At least this seems to be the case or the destiny of a small nation afraid of being forgotten. Here, the arts play the role they have always been playing, both reflecting and engaging a cultural awareness and curiosity.

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